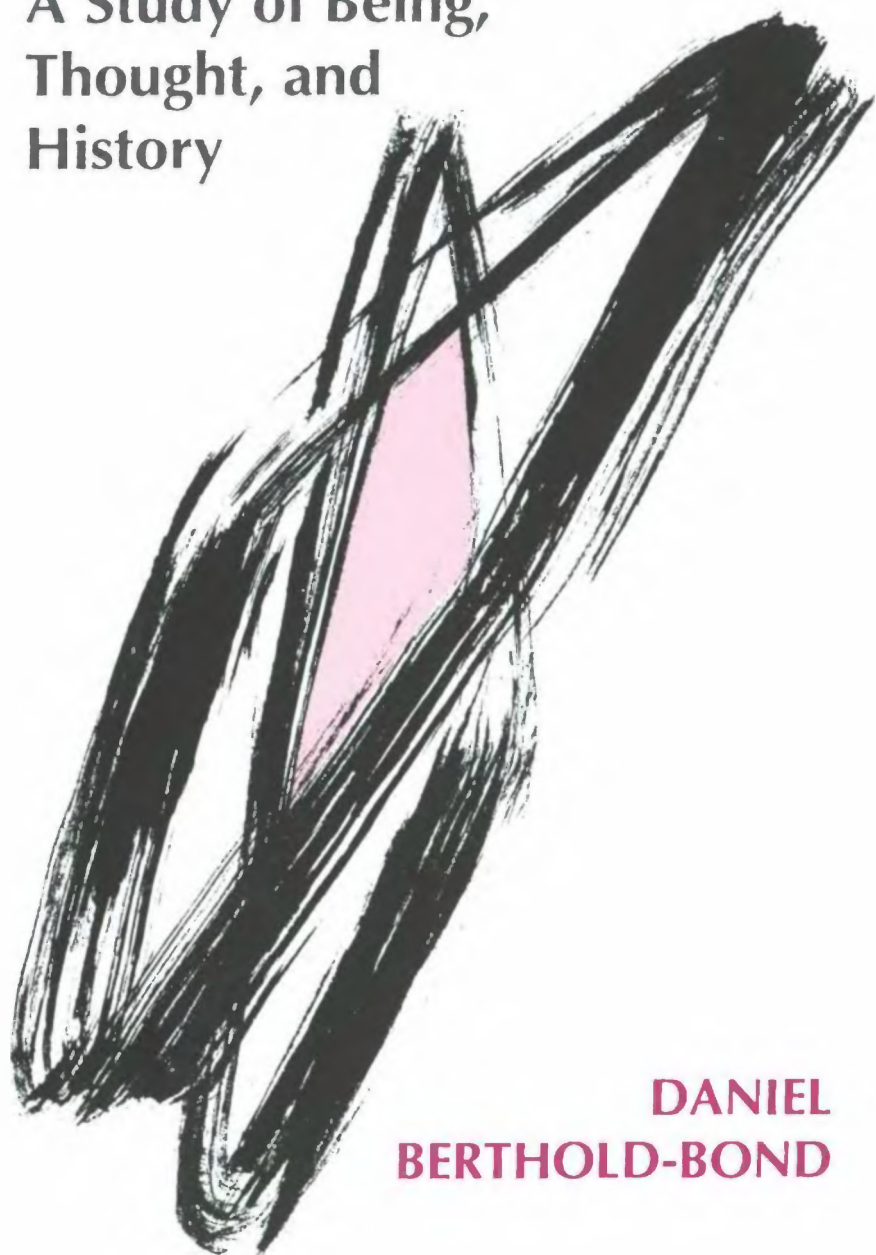


HEGEL'S GRAND SYNTHESIS

A Study of Being,
Thought, and
History



DANIEL
BERTHOLD-BOND

SUNY Series in Hegelian Studies
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Hegel's Grand Synthesis
A Study of Being, Thought, and History

Daniel Berthold-Bond

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ABBREVIATIONS

References to Hegel's writings will be given parenthetically in the text, and abbreviated as follows. For details, see Bibliography.

ARP	<i>On Art, Religion, and Philosophy</i>
Diff	<i>The Difference Between Fichte's and Schelling's System of Philosophy</i>
Differenz	<i>Differenz des Fichte'schen und Schelling'schen Systems der Philosophie</i>
F&K	<i>Faith and Knowledge</i>
FrSys	"Fragment of a System," in Knox and Kroner, <i>Early Theological Writings</i>
GW	<i>Gesammelte Werke</i> , Buchner-Pöggeler
HPh 1,2,3	<i>Lectures on the History of Philosophy</i> , 3 vols.
LL	<i>Science of Logic</i> ("larger" <i>Logic</i>)
Lv	"Love," in Knox and Kroner, <i>Early Theological Writings</i>
Phän	<i>Phänomenologie des Geistes</i>
PhH	<i>Lectures on the Philosophy of History</i>
PhM*	<i>Hegel's Philosophy of Mind/Enzyklopädie der Philosophischen Wissenschaften</i> , Part Three
PhN*	<i>Hegel's Philosophy of Nature/Enzyklopädie</i> , Part Two
PhR*	<i>Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts/The Philosophy of Right</i>
PhRel 1,2,3	<i>Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion</i> , 3 vols.
PhS	<i>Phenomenology of Spirit</i>
RH	<i>Reason in History</i>
SL*	<i>Hegel's Logic</i> ("shorter" <i>Logic</i>)/ <i>Enzyklopädie</i> , Part One
SW	<i>Sämtliche Werke</i> , Lasson-Hoffmeister
SXty	"The Spirit of Christianity and its Fate," in Knox and Kroner, <i>Early Theological Writings</i>
WL 1,2	<i>Wissenschaft der Logik</i> , 2 vols. ("larger" <i>Logic</i>)

* References to these works are to sections (designated 'S'), not pages. I have indicated where citations from these works are from Hegel's "remarks" on the text (*Anmerkungen*), or from passages culled from student notes to his lectures and added to the texts by various editors (*Zusätze*).

Chapter One

INTRODUCTION

Those who have no comprehension of philosophy become speechless, it is true, when they hear the proposition that thought and being are one; none the less, underlying all our actions is the presupposition of the unity of thought and being.

Hegel, *Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences*

Hegel's philosophy is a philosophy of discord and harmony, a historical, metaphysical, and phenomenological exploration of the interacting forces of strife and reconciliation. It is a philosophy of *discord* because the Hegelian dialectic is impelled forward by the inherent force of sheer "negativity," which undermines all that is stable, which proves all satisfaction to be ephemeral, which animates all life by a dynamic of self-opposition and estrangement. It is this philosophy of discord which motivates Hegel's famous description of human history as "the slaughterbench at which the happiness of peoples, the wisdom of states, and the virtue of individuals have been victimized" (PhH 21),¹ and his portrayal of the path of human consciousness in its pursuit of self-realization as "the pathway of doubt, or more precisely, the way of despair" (PhS 49). Discord is an intrinsic, dynamic element of all life, and hence not something we can avoid, however much we may seek strategies of escape through wish-fulfillment or self-deception. Much of Hegel's first great philosophic work, the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, is devoted to exposing the way in which all such strategies – whether that of the Master seeking to satisfy his longing for self-assurance through domination of the Other,

or of the Stoic seeking solace from the strife and suffering of the world through a flight into solitude, or of the Sceptic seeking by sheer force of doubt to disarm reality of its power over him – how all such strategies ultimately collapse, being incapable of sustaining a feeling of harmony in the midst of the discord of alienation they inevitably engender. Hegel is absolutely committed to the harsh proposition that “the life of spirit is not the life that shrinks from . . . the tremendous power of the negative . . . and keeps itself untouched by devastation [Verwüstung], but rather the life that endures it and maintains itself in it” (PhS 19).

Yet Hegel’s philosophy is also a philosophy of *harmony*. He writes in his Berlin lectures on the *History of Philosophy* that while “the eternal life [of spirit] consists in the very process of continually producing . . . opposition [within itself],” it also consists in the process of “continually reconciling it” (HPh 3:551). Just as Heraclitus found harmony in opposition, in the tension of the archer’s bow and the union of opposing musical tones, Hegel insists that in the very strife of negativity there is an underlying harmony, a principle of unity and synthesis in the midst of discord.

Hegel, like Heraclitus, finds particular forms of harmony in different varieties of discord, but there is one fundamental relationship which determines the overall pattern of each particular unity-within-opposition he describes. I refer to what Friedrich Engels called “the great basic question of all philosophy, . . . that concerning the relation of thinking and being.”² It is this relation between thinking and being – or self and world, consciousness and reality – that Hegel is concerned to trace out in his philosophy through all of its historical alterations and vicissitudes, identifying the dynamics by which the two terms of the relation perpetually fall into discord, and seeking to uncover and demonstrate the harmony he finds in the midst of this discord. For although “the highest severance is the opposition between thought and being, . . . the interest of philosophy . . . [consists in] comprehending their unity” (HPh 3:160).

Some sixty years before Engels had penned the above-cited words, Hegel had written that “the ultimate aim and business of philosophy is to reconcile thought . . . with reality” (HPh 3:545). Thought and reality stand in need of reconciliation, precisely because their relation is first of all one of opposition. Every new birthpang of spirit takes place in pain and separation, and every achieved satisfaction of spirit breeds a new desire and hence a new sense of discord and yearning. Yet Hegel is convinced that this discord is not a purely destructive, nihilistic force, a purposeless havoc of anarchy, but that it masks a

deeper unity, a secret power of reconciliation, like Milton's "hidden soul of harmony . . . through mazes running."³ This theme of the ultimate unity of thought and being, in the very midst of their discord – what I will refer to as the Hegelian *grand synthesis* – will be the central theme of this book.

In one of Hegel's earliest philosophic writings, *The Difference Between Fichte's and Schelling's System of Philosophy* (1801), he suggests that "the need for philosophy" arises in times of cultural upheaval and intellectual disillusionment, where there is a perceived disunity between human ideals and human reality. He writes that "disunion or division [*die Entzweiung*] is the source of the need of philosophy. . . . [Only] when the might of union vanishes from the life of men, [does] the need of philosophy arise" (Diff 89,91). Fifteen years later, in his *History of Philosophy*, Hegel echoes this insight.

It may be said that philosophy first commences when a people has for the most part left its concrete [customary] life, . . . and when a gulf has arisen between inward strivings and external reality, and the old forms of religion, &c., are no longer satisfying. . . . Philosophy is the reconciliation following upon the disintegration of the real world (HPH 1:52).

Hegel's philosophy is guided throughout by the goal of reconciling human consciousness with its world, of unifying thought and being. But as these passages suggest, his philosophy is not out to show that thought and being immediately coincide, for in fact the need of philosophy arises only in times of the falling-asunder of the "might of union." Indeed, "life eternally forms itself by setting up oppositions, and [an authentic union of consciousness and world] . . . is only possible through its own reestablishment out of the deepest fission [*der höchsten Trennung*]" (Diff 91).⁴

This is crucial for our understanding of Hegel's grand synthesis, that thought and being do not immediately coincide, but that their unity is the result of a historical process of the human spirit struggling with the oppositions and divisions of cultural upheaval. Hegel is not out to show, as Parmenides was, that all change and discord is illusory, nor as Plato was, that the world of appearance and becoming was ultimately "unreal." The strife of becoming is the very lifeblood of being for Hegel, both historically and psychologically, so that any harmony that is to be found can only occur *through process*. This points to what will be a central focus of my analysis of Hegel's basic theme of the unity of thought and being – that both thought and being are

inherently processes of becoming. Hegel steadfastly holds to the principle that neither thought nor being can be adequately described or comprehended apart from its grounding in history. Both follow a teleological course of becoming and development in the world, and Hegel's task becomes one of demonstrating that the teleological progression of being is a process which (in some sense) parallels the *Bildung* of thought, so that there is no ultimate gulf between being and thought. It cannot be overemphasized that this is no immediate identity, however, for again, it is just the consciousness of disparity between thought and being which is the impulse towards the "labor of transformation of spirit" (PhS 6), towards the progressive development and enrichment of thought and being in history.

But it is only because thought has the power to "transform it[self] into a world" (HPh 3:546), so that our thought and the being of the world are united in a shared dialectic of development and transformation, that we are not finally alienated from the world. It is this transformative, revolutionary power of thought that leads to the possibility of reason becoming "conscious of itself as its own world, and of the world as itself" (PhS 263), so that thought and being achieve a unification.

My aim in this book is to analyze Hegel's project of demonstrating that both being and thought are conditioned by an internal impulse to becoming, and how this is to establish his vision of a grand synthesis of thought (or knowledge) and being (or world). My procedure will be to look at central themes of his epistemology, metaphysics, philosophy of history, and philosophic method, tracing out and critically assessing the hypotheses and arguments he employs to establish his position. In Chapter Two, I will introduce Hegel's double theme of (a) the essential *unity* and (b) the immanent *becoming* of thought and being through an examination of his theory of truth. Chapter Three, an analysis of Hegel's theory of knowledge, will expand on the first of these themes; and Chapter Four, an investigation of Hegel's theory of becoming and dialectic, will elaborate on the second. I will then turn, in Chapter Five, to a discussion of Hegel's philosophic method, where we will see how his radical reconception of the nature of scientific demonstration illuminates his claim that knowing and being are united in a teleological process of becoming.

Just as Hegel views his philosophic method as one which initiates a pathway of development leading from initial "shapes" or *Gestalten* of a problem towards a consummating resolution which these initial phases anticipate, so too Chapters Two through Five of the present work are best described as a "pathway" towards a culminating denoue-

ment in the companion Chapters Six and Seven, where I will discuss Hegel's eschatological vision. In successively articulating various facets or "shapes" of the Hegelian grand synthesis, the earlier chapters will be preparing the stage for the last act, in which we will explore a certain tension which emerges in the anatomy of Hegel's grand synthesis between two basic, conflicting desiderata.

The first desideratum is the description of both being and thought as inherently teleological processes of becoming; without such a description, Hegel feels that we cannot give an adequate account of either knowing or being. The second desideratum is for an account of thought (or knowledge) which will overcome epistemological relativism and scepticism, and an account of being which will overcome its perpetual alienation; Hegel believes that only his system of philosophy can achieve this *Aufhebung* of the "never-ending striving" of spirit. I will argue that these two desiderata unavoidably create an internal conflict in Hegel's philosophy, for if becoming is not simply an ephemeral, temporary feature of thought and being, but their very essence – as indeed Hegel insists it is – then the *overcoming* of the dialectic of becoming in "Absolute Knowledge" and in what Hegel calls the "repose of being" seems to be self-defeating, suggesting the negation of the necessary condition for the very possibility of knowledge and existence.

I do not feel that this is just another example of a dialectical tension which is to be overcome by Hegel's infamous principle of the "unity of opposites" (a principle which we will see to be fundamental to his grand synthesis of thought and being). I hope to show that it is, rather, an unresolved conflict in Hegel's philosophy, reflecting a real ambivalence between his metaphysics of becoming and his anatomy of an absolute "conclusion of the movement in which spirit has shaped itself" (PhS 490). In the concluding chapters (Six and Seven) I will discuss this tension at some length, and offer an interpretation of Hegel's philosophy in which the desideratum for an absolute consummation of thought and being is set aside in favor of a less extreme doctrine which is consonant with his metaphysics of becoming. I will argue that only under this interpretation, which is in conflict with the generally accepted reading of Hegel, can we make sense of his grand synthesis, and further, that this interpretation does not leave Hegel completely defenseless against scepticism and the charge of epistemological relativism, the two related "evils" he sought to avoid by insisting on an absolute consummation of his dialectic.

The task of interpreting Hegel's eschatological language of a completion of the dialectic of becoming is a notoriously difficult one. By

and large, I believe it is fair to say that commentators have either tended to choose all too quickly for one side or the other of the Hegelian dilemma – either his commitment to a metaphysics of becoming or his commitment to a closure of becoming – or to show a tremendous hesitancy in making a choice at all. The former, in turn, either argue (very much against the evidence, I feel) that there simply is no dilemma – that Hegel really never was committed to a metaphysics of becoming or else really never was committed to a closure of becoming – or, and there seems no kinder way of putting it, they simply ignore the dilemma. Those who maintain a stance of hesitancy do so with every right and with the evidence very much in their support, since, as I will try to show, *Hegel himself was hesitant: he was profoundly and unremittingly ambivalent about how to resolve the dilemma he had gotten himself into. My own feeling is that it is possible to choose for Hegel where he himself did not; that such a choice, if made with care, violates no philosophic principles of Hegel's system, since the dilemma he is led into by his ambivalence is not itself necessitated by his philosophic principles, but is more a wayward turn; and that the reconstruction of the Hegelian system entailed by such a choice offers us the chance to revitalize the "magic charm," as Hans-Georg Gadamer puts it,⁵ of Hegel's dialectical vision of history which his ambivalence had placed so much into question. The crucial note of caution here is that we must not choose too quickly, or seek to simply brush one side of the dilemma under the rug. We must recognize and seek to justify that the process of choice does initiate a reconstruction of Hegel's philosophic vision; for by seeking to resolve his ambivalence, one pole of the dilemma must be displaced, and this will certainly have important repercussions on the system as a whole.⁶*

In the Book of Revelation, the author concludes the account of his revelation by saying:

I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, if any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book;

And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book. (Rev. 22:18-19)

To avoid this double curse when reading Hegel is not easy; we are often faced with the danger of either adding to or leaving something

out of account in our interpretations of his philosophy. This is partly due to what Hegel himself admits is the justified reputation of Germans for being "not infrequently obscure" (PhM §394 *Zusatz*)! But more than that, there is much truth in John Heckman's insight that "each generation . . . feels that it has discovered or rediscovered Hegel."⁷ Hegel himself gives support for this phenomenon, for he believes that while "the demand that the historian should proceed with impartiality . . . seems to be a legitimate demand," it is not, since

it demands that the historian shall bring with him no definite aim and view by which he may sort out, state, and criticize things. . . . A history without such aim and such criticism would be only an imbecile mental divagation [*nur ein schwachsinniges Ergehen des Vorstellens*] . . . (PhM §549 *Anmerkung*).

And in his *History of Philosophy* Hegel writes that we cannot "merely expound on what is given, . . . [for] to expound without the individual spirit, as though the sense were one entirely given, is impossible. . . . Just because I make something clear to myself, I make my conception, my thought, a factor in it; otherwise it is just a dead and external thing, which is not present for me at all" (HPh 3:13).

If we take Hegel at his word, then it seems appropriate that each generation should have its own discovery and appreciation of his philosophy, for each age will be animated by new historical and cultural perspectives. Our own age is in many ways one of disillusionment and apprehension, an age struggling to find a sense of purpose and moral identity, situated as it is in the aftermath of the Holocaust and towards an anxiety-laden future fraught with the risk of nuclear Armageddon. What message Hegel's philosophy holds for our age depends upon how we interpret his eschatological language of the "completion of the work" of spirit (PhS 486). If, as is usual, we read Hegel literally when he announces the "absolute end of history" (PhH 103), then we must say that history has already achieved its purpose, and we are merely carrying out the last cycle of destiny, spiralling downward ever closer to the final act of death. History, by this reading, is pronouncing its last rites, and the Freudian prediction of an ultimate victory of the death instincts over the instincts of life is achieving its historical fulfillment.

I have already shown my hand, and declared my intention to argue for a nonliteral reading of Hegel's eschatology. We will have to look very carefully at the literal (absolutist) reading when we reach Chapters Six and Seven, and be careful not to dismiss it solely because

we are uncomfortable with its implications for our modern age. It should already be clear, however, that if we are successful in our argument for a less absolutist (less literal) interpretation of Hegel's theory of completion, then his message for our contemporary world would obviously be entirely different from the bleak and frankly terrifying destiny implied by the absolutist interpretation. Hegel's message would then stand not as a prediction of doom but as a voice of hope for redemption from our disenchantment with the world – what Freud calls man's "*Unbehagen*," his uneasiness and discontent with his civilization. It would stand, that is, as a challenge to resist the attitude of indifference and despair, and to recognize that reason has the power to transform the world, "beget[ting] revolutions in the world as well as in individuals" (HPh 3:8), and that it is our highest responsibility to take up and use this power conscientiously. For Hegel, it is precisely in times such as our own, times of cultural, historical crisis and discord – where "the might of union has vanished from the life of men," and "a gulf has arisen between inward strivings and external reality" – that we must "give ear to the urgency [of spirit]" and hear its "summons" (HPh 3:553), to struggle to heal over our wounds, to transfigure our *anomie*, to search out a higher harmony in the midst of our sense of discord. By my proposed reading of Hegel, his grand synthesis of thought and being, of inward strivings and external reality, is not something which is now *accomplished*, but is rather *ever accomplishing itself*, standing as a perpetual challenge to revitalize our ideals and sense of purpose, and to remake our world accordingly.

Chapter Two

HEGEL'S THEORY OF TRUTH

Christ: To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth.

Pilate: What is truth?

John 19:37-38

Hegel writes in his *Encyclopædia* that "we tend to think it is not worth our trouble to occupy ourselves with . . . logic, . . . for it [deals with things which are so] familiar to us, . . . our own thought and its familiar forms: and these are the acme of simplicity, the ABC of everything else." But, he continues, this is a quite shortsighted point of view, for in fact "the problem is to become acquainted with [our thought] in a new way, quite opposite to that in which we know [it] already" (SL §19 *Anmerkung*). It is the deliberate intention of Hegel's philosophy to disorient its readers, to dis-locate them from their usual, commonsense way of thinking, and to initiate them into a fundamentally new way of thinking. In fact Hegel's entire philosophic program can be seen as an attempt to bring commonsense understanding – what he calls "the natural consciousness" – to the uncomfortable position where it no longer views its standpoint complacently, but as a *problem*. A problem, that is, in Wittgenstein's sense of a "genuine philosophic problem," which he defines as "having the form, 'I do not know my way about' [*Ich kenne mich nicht aus*]."¹ It is in this spirit that Hegel describes his philosophy as a path upon which "natural consciousness" will experience the very "loss of its own self; . . . the road can therefore be regarded as the pathway of doubt, or more precisely

the way of despair" (PhS 49). It is only through the tortuous path of discord, of the perpetual uprooting of our natural, intuitive sense of being immediately at home in our world, that a genuine harmony can finally emerge.

One of the most difficult and puzzling aspects of Hegel's attempt to dislodge the commonsense understanding from its familiar world is his theory of truth. Nothing could be further from the straightforwardness and sobriety of our commonsense view of truth than Hegel's description of "the true" as "the Bacchanalian revel in which no member is not drunk" (PhS 27)! While there are a large number of vexatious issues which are involved in Hegel's theory of truth, I wish in this chapter to limit myself to an examination of three particularly mystifying and labyrinthine themes, while delaying other important aspects of his theory for discussion in later chapters.² These themes are (1) Hegel's intentional posing of truth in terms of a dilemma, the dilemma that truth is both eternal and temporal; (2) the thorny question of the relation between human consciousness and divine *Logos* in Hegel's anatomy of the "subject" (or "agent") of truth; and (3) Hegel's attitude towards the traditional correspondence criterion of truth, and the "twist" he effects in it. Each of these issues is crucial for understanding Hegel's attempt to lead the "natural consciousness" to a new way of thinking, and each in its own way will begin the process of initiation into the Hegelian project of a grand synthesis. For Hegel's analysis of truth illuminates the dual commitments of his grand synthesis – the unity of thought and being, and the exposition of this unity as a dynamic process of becoming – in a very clear way.

1. Truth as a Temporal, Historical Event

If there is anything at all which could challenge Fichte's rhetorical question, "In two thousand years, have the philosophers not brought forth a single principle which they might thenceforth be allowed to assume [as settled]?"³ it may be the conviction that truth, if there is such a thing, is eternal, not subject to change with time. Indeed, to take exception to this doctrine generally invites the suspicion that it is simply not truth we are talking about.

What are we to say of Hegel in this regard? His position, in good Hegelian fashion, is ambiguous. He states flatly that truth is "not capable of change" (HPH 1:5), that "philosophy aims at what is unchangeable, eternal, . . . its end is truth, . . . [and] truth is eternal; it does not fall within the sphere of the transient and *has no history*"

(HPh 1:7f). This all seems quite proper. But far from resting content with this formulation of truth, Hegel regards it as a problem, indeed as a dilemma. For he is equally convinced that "there is not in philosophy . . . a fixed and fundamental truth which, as unchangeable, is *apart* from history" (HPh 1:9)!⁴ "Truth," indeed, "is impelled towards development, . . . [it] internally bestirs and develops itself" (HPh 1:27).

It is important to note that Hegel is not simply speaking here of our *consciousness* of truth, which we can hardly doubt to be a historical process (for we must come to learn it). No, it is truth itself which is historical. We have an inadequate view of truth, Hegel says, if we regard it as being "at rest," and "not in time," for it is "not really rest, . . . [but] development, . . . a progressive existence in time" (HPh 1:33).

(a) Hegel and Frege: Truth and Thought

How are we to reconcile these two views, that truth is eternal, changeless, and without history, and yet temporal, developing, and not apart from history?⁵ Is Hegel simply toying with us here, subjecting us to his often remarked upon delight in the contradictory and paradoxical? Hegel's solution, it seems to me, is in certain illuminating ways not so different from the spirit of Gottlob Frege's important article "The Thought: A Logical Inquiry."⁶ Like Frege, Hegel's analysis of truth involves an examination of its relation to thought: "a thought," as Frege puts it, "is something for which the question of truth arises."⁷ Frege goes on to say that a thought is eternal, something which is "timelessly true" (or false),⁸ but that it "acts by being apprehended . . . : [its] effect is brought about by an act of the thinker without which [it] would be ineffective. . . ."⁹ Thought expresses truth, and makes it effective, and this can only occur by an act of the thinker. But this means that truth can only occur (i.e., appear – have its effect "brought about") in time, and hence that it must have a historical presence. For apprehension (which makes thought effective, which in turn expresses truth) is temporal, the result of a process of education, of exploration, of discovery. Truth is indeed eternal – thoughts "can be true without being apprehended by a thinker," as Frege puts it¹⁰ – but truth is made concrete, or "brought into operation," only by being apprehended, and hence by appearing in time.

Whether or not this is a legitimate interpretation of Frege's view, Hegel seeks to resolve the above-mentioned dilemma – that truth is both eternal and historical – along these lines. It is because truth requires thought in order to "bring it into operation," or make it "effec-

tive," that he speaks of truth as a *result* (see, e.g., PhS 10f; HPh 3:421f), but a result which is itself a *process* (see HPh 3:526).¹¹ For thought, which makes truth concrete, is itself a process, a *Bildung* of discovery. Hegel thus speaks of truth as the "motion" of thought (see HPh 2:49; 1:25).

It is important to understand that Hegel is not insensitive to the distinction Aristotle and Aquinas (for example) make between the "order of knowing" and the "order of being."¹² At the center of this distinction is the insight that while knowledge is essentially temporal, or historical, being is essentially eternal. Now while it is true that Hegel adopts Spinoza's theory that "the order and connection of ideas is the same as the order and connection of things,"¹³ it is not true that he ignores the distinction between the orders of knowing and being. For he differs from Spinoza in that for him (Hegel), the "order and connection of things" – the order of being, or the world in general – is not a static substance (as he feels it is for Spinoza), but a temporally unfolding process. Hegel thus says of the "order of being" that it is itself something that *becomes*; it is the *process* of this becoming as a whole that is eternal. It is just the fact that the "order of being" is temporal that the "order of knowing" can ultimately coincide with it, according to Hegel – i.e., that categories of thought are equally categories of being. This equating of epistemological and ontological categories is the central principle of Hegel's idealism, which will be discussed in the next chapter, and also amounts to the fundamental statement of purpose of his grand synthesis. I say "statement of purpose" since the principle of the mirroring of categories of thought and being is by no means simply a dogmatic presupposition of Hegel's idealism, but a hypothesis which Hegel seeks to argue for. He seeks to show, that is, that only under such an hypothesis of synthesis can we construct a theory of knowledge, a philosophy of history, and a phenomenology of human consciousness which is heuristically powerful enough to account for the full richness of human experience.

Let us look a little more closely at Hegel's posing of truth as a dilemma. In his *History of Philosophy*, where he presents the dilemma of the two ways of seeing truth in its clearest formulation, Hegel fleshes out his resolution to this dilemma by offering two principles which he says are intrinsic to thought: the principles of development (*die Entwicklung*) and the concrete (*das Konkrete*).

(b) *The Principle of Development*

Hegel's principle of development is essentially an appropriation of Aristotle's analysis of potency and act, as well as the teleological

framework within which Aristotle couches this analysis. Hegel, like Aristotle, distinguishes between the *potentia* (potentiality, capacity – or to use Hegel's jargon, "being in itself," the "implicit") and *actus* (actuality, fulfillment, "being for itself," the "explicit") of things. It is in the nature of beings to develop, and this development is immanent within beings from the start, as potentiality. Beings have within themselves "a creative seed endowed with formative properties," as Aristotle says.¹⁴ Now Hegel claims that not only is biological life a teleological process of immanent development from embryo to maturity, but that *all* being, and notably mental existence (consciousness), follows this course.¹⁵ The being of consciousness, like all being, is a becoming, an evolutionary – or better, teleological – activity of formation.

We will discuss the assumptions behind this claim in later chapters, but for now we can content ourselves with pointing out that one of the seemingly less controversial aspects of this claim is simply that thought requires education, a *Bildung*. As Aristotle says, "the end of knowledge is truth," but in order to achieve this end, we must first "develop the powers of thought."¹⁶ To truly understand what an object is – whether it is a tree or a social ideal or our own selves – requires the process of deciphering its meaning, of making its essence explicit for consciousness. What the object is, is implicit in its immediate appearance, but, as Heraclitus says, "nature loves to hide" its deeper significance – which is only to say that we cannot simply set our eyes on an object and know its essential nature straightaway. This fuller knowledge requires that we make explicit what is implicit in the object. A tree is a complex organism, governed by complex biochemical and biophysical laws, and situated within a complex organization of nature; the tree cannot be fully known without a knowledge of these complexities. A social ideal is a cultural and historical product that cannot be understood apart from an intimate knowledge of that culture and history. And the self is hardly a transparent possession of consciousness. To know any of these objects necessitates a labor on the part of thought. "All knowledge," Hegel says, "has no other object than to draw out [*aus sich heraus zu ziehen*] what is inward and implicit and thus [for our knowledge itself] to become objective" (HPh 1:22).

(c) The Principle of Concretion

Hegel regards this "drawing out" as the process of the education of consciousness displayed in history – both the individual's history and, on a larger scale, the history of human culture. History exhibits the relation of consciousness to the world, and this developing rela-

tion constitutes our knowledge, our appropriation of truth. Now in this *Bildung* of thought, truth is made manifest, or "operative," as Frege says – and this is what gives truth its historical, temporal manifestation. This is explicated in Hegel's second principle mentioned above – the principle of concretion. "Truth," Hegel writes, is "the process of the self-actualization of the *Begriff* [concept, notion]," that is, of thought in general (PhN §378 *Zusatz*). This self-actualization is the *making-concrete* of thought, its articulation and specification. Thought has to do with universals (with categories, concepts, laws, theories), and yet objective knowledge must be of the "concrete" (or "instantiated") universal if it is to be more than abstract, formal knowledge (v. SL §163; PhM §378 *Zusatz*). Hence commentators like Francis Ellingwood Abbot, an important critic of Hegel's at the turn of the century, could not be more wrong when they say that Hegel's "conception of the *Begriff*" is one of "rational universality *minus* empirical individuality."¹⁷ Hegel over and over again insists that a knowledge of this "empirical individuality" is absolutely essential to make the *Begriff* "concrete." As he says in a telling, if somewhat quaint, passage from his lectures on the *Philosophy of Religion*, "it is the cowardice of abstract thought to shun sensuous presence in monkish fashion" (PhRel 3:101). There are various ways of seeing what Hegel means here.

In the sphere of self-becoming, for example, it is not enough that a person knows abstractly ("in principle" or "in theory," as we say) that he or she is a moral agent, free and responsible. To pride oneself on one's ethical character solely within the interior solitude of one's conscience is not enough. The person must enter into interaction with others and must not avoid the ensuing conflicts between his or her own conscience and the conscience of others. The person must experience the inevitable disillusionment and anxiety involved in what Heidegger calls "being-in-the-world-amongst-others." One must, in short, test oneself, measure one's ideals against the given reality of the world (its customs, norms, laws), and win-through to one's ethical nature – make it "concrete" – in the face of the turmoil and conflict entailed by living with others.

This principle of concretion is necessary for all thought, not just our reflection on our ethical consciousness. We may have an abstract (or theoretical) knowledge of the natural world, for example, by understanding various "laws of nature." But unless we know as well how these laws are actually realized and articulated in nature, our knowledge amounts to pure abstraction. While scientific knowledge requires the universal, still, "if thought never gets further than the universality of its ideas, . . . it is justly open to the charge of formalism"

(SL §12). The universal is individuated – made concrete – in the “particularity” of things and events, and Hegel is convinced that unless we delve into the differentiation hidden by the universality of concepts, our thought cannot be complete, and certainly not practical. I believe this is also what Merleau-Ponty has in mind when he says that “thought is the passage from the indeterminate to the determinate, [which involves] a recasting at every moment of [our originally indeterminate thought] in the unity of a new meaning.”¹⁸ It is when this delving-into-differentiation, or articulation, “returns” to the universal, enriched by the experience of diversity, that thought becomes truly concrete.

Where do we stand now as to the dilemma of truth? Truth is a *development*, because it is made “operative” by the act of appropriation in thought, which is itself a temporal process. And the historical course of this appropriation is a process of making thought *concrete*. “What is true is found in motion, in a process,” Hegel insists, precisely because it is “made manifest,” that is, made concrete, in the teleological development of thought (HPh 1:25). It should be noted that we have here in Hegel’s theory of truth the basic structure of his grand synthesis of thought and being, for truth is the developing concretion of *thought* in the world of history and culture, in *being*. Further, it is precisely in the fact that this interactive dynamic of thought and being is a developmental process, that we can see how Hegel’s grand synthesis is grounded in his metaphysics of becoming.

(d) The Question of Relativism

The synthesis we have outlined in this first section of the chapter, the synthesis of truth as eternal and historical, is absolutely central to Hegel’s attempt to bring the “natural consciousness” to a new way of thinking. For a mainstay of this “new way” is learning to see truth as having a dialectical, evolutionary character – that is, as being grounded in Hegel’s metaphysics of becoming. This indicates the tremendous importance Hegel places on *history* as the theater in which truth becomes progressively manifest.

Perhaps the most troublesome question which this Hegelian recasting of the character of truth raises is the question of relativism. Truth is eternal, Hegel says, but as we have seen, this does not mean that it is immune from change – indeed, it is precisely the whole process of change, or evolution, that is eternal. But if truth is perpetually changing, perpetually evolving, are we not condemned to relativism? This question will be a major focus of Chapter Seven; but since our current discussion of the temporality of truth so clearly invites the

charge of relativism, we should perhaps anticipate our later discussion by making a few preliminary remarks here.

I believe it is Hegel's view that it is simply a prejudice of common-sense understanding that truth must be unchanging and immutable in order for it to have any meaning. This commitment to the immutability of truth, so much a part of our usual way of thinking, effectively begs the question of what truth must be like. Hegel is arguing that this usual view is unable to do justice to the intrinsically historical, temporal character of human reality – truth cannot somehow be "above" or "beyond" time, without losing the very condition for its becoming "effective" and "operative."

Further, Hegel would be sorely troubled by the charge that he has reduced truth to relativism. Indeed it is his feeling that the orthodox view of the immutability of truth ultimately condemns us to scepticism and relativism. For if we hold fast to the idea that truth cannot have a historical essence, we will inevitably become disillusioned by the fact that what one period of culture calls true is repeatedly revised and altered by successive stages of culture. On the other hand, Hegel is convinced that his own dialectical-historical vision of truth allows us to see how separate cultural visions of truth are in fact united by a common bond of inquiry, in a unified, continuous history. This is what allows Hegel to disavow any pretension to write a philosophy which would somehow replace previous philosophies – indeed, he says that his philosophy shows that "no philosophy has ever been refuted" (HPh 1:37).¹⁹

This means that for Hegel "each [philosophy] in turn . . . [is] the one and true philosophy" (HPh 1:17f), for "philosophy . . . is the totality of [its] forms, . . . where all principles are preserved" and contribute to the "one truth" (HPh 3:546). Truths of the past are not converted into falsehoods through the evolution of culture. They remain true, as the vital links of our cultural heritage, as signposts marking the path of the evolution of human knowledge. Along this path, opposing, conflicting truths emerge: this is the dialectical character of history and the human mind, the Hegelian notion of "evolution through strife," the "Bacchanalian" character of truth. But this does not invalidate a truth, for this conflict is the very lifeblood of knowledge and culture, the very essence of truth itself.

Still, as we shall see, Hegel himself seems to have been uncomfortable with the relativistic implications of his theory of truth. This uneasiness, in fact, leads him directly into the dilemma and conflict I mentioned in the Introduction, between his commitment to a

metaphysics of becoming and his eventual suggestion of a closure of the dialectic of becoming. For despite his theory of the intrinsic temporality of truth, when he comes to sketch out his vision of an "Absolute Knowledge," he is led to speak of the *annihilation* (*Tilgung*) of time, where philosophic thought "sets aside its time-form" (PhS 487).

Of course, it is not obvious at this point exactly what Hegel means by this idea of the *Tilgung* of time, and this is one of a whole constellation of ambiguous concepts suggesting a radical, absolute completion of history that we will have to look at very carefully in our final two chapters. At least on the surface, however, Hegel's talk of an annihilation of time seems to suggest a fundamental transformation of the nature of truth, once "spirit has completed its work" and arrived at Absolute Knowledge, into something which lacks the principles of development and concretion. If this is so, then it would have lost precisely those conditions by which it is effective and operative, a circumstance which would seem to warrant the most radical eschatological conclusion – that the close of the history of human culture and spirit is at hand.

It is just this prospect of an absolute end to history that has caused so much criticism of Hegel's eschatology. This is particularly true, perhaps, of Marxist critiques. Herbert Marcuse questions "the most curious fashion" in which Hegel "bring[s] the historicity of life to a standstill."²⁰ More polemically, the Marxist Raya Dunayevskaya expresses her outrage with Hegel's (purported) termination of the dialectic of becoming by rhetorically asking "how could he have stopped the ceaseless motion of the dialectic just because his pen reached the end of his [book]?"²¹ And more polemically yet, Julia Kristeva, another ardent Marxist critic of Hegel, goes so far as to call "paranoid" and "repressive" what she sees as the Hegelian abolishment of the dialectic, since it implies a fear of finitude.²²

Thus far, however, we have seen only Hegel's strong commitment to the dialectic of becoming, and while I have anticipated here the dilemma and conflict that awaits us at the end of our discussion of Hegel's grand synthesis, it is important not to lose sight of this commitment, and to trace it out as fully as possible through all the meanderings of his epistemology and metaphysics. I will argue, in fact, when we do arrive at the culmination of Hegel's philosophy (and of our own analysis) in Absolute Knowledge, that the logical conclusion of this dialectic *cannot* be to accept the absolutist interpretation of his eschatological language, however much it may appear on the surface that this is Hegel's intent.

2. The "Agency" of Truth

More must be said of Hegel's conception of truth as the "motion of thought." To say that truth is the motion of thought requires an answer to the question of *whose* thought is being referred to. Whose thought is it that imparts "motion" to truth? As Marx put it, "this process must have a bearer, a subject."²³ The answer to this question is complicated, for Hegel has both a panlogistic (even pantheistic) and a more anthropocentric vision of the subject that thinks truth.

In one of the most well-known passages of his *Phenomenology*, Hegel writes that "in my view, . . . everything turns on grasping and expressing the true not only as substance,²⁴ but equally as subject" (PhS 10). Even more strongly, Hegel asserts that "substance is essentially subject" (PhS 14) – "the living substance is being which is in truth subject" (PhS 10). Now what is this "subject"? It is surely not Kierkegaard's "subjectivity," at least insofar as we see Kierkegaard's subjectivity as finally closed off from objectivity.²⁵ Hegel wants to avoid the radical relativism entailed by Kierkegaard's identification of truth with the "pathos of inwardness" at all costs. Indeed, some of the most telling and eloquent passages of Hegel's *Phenomenology* are reserved for his analysis of the narcissism of the Master, the Stoic, and the Beautiful Soul who adopt a subjective "law of the heart" which is often strikingly close to Kierkegaard's "pathos of inwardness."

And yet, as for Kierkegaard, the Hegelian "subject" is the *self*: substance which is subject is "movement and unfolded becoming; but it is just this unrest that is the self" (PhS 12). But what is this "self"? This question amounts to the question of who, or what, is the *agent of truth* – for this "subject," this "self," is the locus of thought, and as we have seen, thought is the making-manifest or -operative of truth.

(a) Hegel and Heidegger: the Anthropocentric Interpretation of Truth

There is something to be said for seeing Hegel's answer to this question – "where do we locate the agency of truth?", "what is this 'subject,' this 'self'?" – as similar to Martin Heidegger's. Heidegger, like Hegel, says that truth has a historical existence.²⁶ And he means by this that "the foundation for the primordial phenomenon of truth" is the "being-in-the-world" of human *Dasein*.²⁷ Hence, Heidegger states flatly that "there is truth only in so far as *Dasein* is and so long as *Dasein* is," and that "all truth is relative to *Dasein*."²⁸ Truth does not, however, arise with just any "existential structure" of man for Heidegger – it arises only under the condition that an individual has fought-through to an "authentic existence."²⁹

Leaving aside for the moment the question of what "authenticity" amounts to,³⁰ it is Heidegger's view that truth emerges, or rather, is "disclosed" or "revealed," through a "modification" of the world by *Dasein's* coming-to-authenticity.³¹ That is, the world (the object of consciousness) is transformed by consciousness' coming to a deeper understanding of it. This is also Hegel's view, for he writes that "mind itself *alters* its object, and by developing it, develops it into truth" (PhM §445 *Zusatz*). This view is the root of Hegel's idealism, which must be discussed at length in a later chapter.³² But whether or not Heidegger can cogently be described as an idealist (as I think he can), the conclusion he draws from this analysis of truth is that the "historical existence" of truth signifies the human-centeredness – the "*Dasein*-relatedness" – of truth. Truth is an anthropocentric phenomenon, not something "eternal" in the sense of transcending human time (human history).³³

There seem to be obvious problems with such a view as it stands. For example, if in fact it is true that the first helium atom was formed in the core of a "big bang" some 15 billion years or so ago, how can this possibly be regarded as an anthropomorphic phenomenon? A scientist's *speculation* about this occurrence is surely anthropomorphic, but of the event itself, the "objective referent" of the scientist's propositions, it seems ludicrous to say the same thing. Insofar as Hegel shares Heidegger's view of the anthropocentricity of truth, it seems that he must either assert that man existed from all eternity (as Plato and Aristotle asserted, for example), or that he must abandon the simple identification of truth with anthropocentricity, and regard the prehistory of man as having a truth value only for God.³⁴

Two things may be said here as regards Hegel's position (Heidegger's is not the same). First of all, Hegel is not a *subjective* idealist but an *absolute* idealist. Hence, his claim that "all being is being for consciousness" – the essential credo of all idealism – does not risk falling into personalism, for, as we shall see, the consciousness referred to is always in one sense transpersonal. So even if there is a prehistory of man – a hypothesis that Hegel explicitly addresses in his *Philosophy of Nature*³⁵ – nature is not a blind chaos, but the manifestation of a transpersonal *Logos* (v. PhN §247 *Zusatz*). This may save Hegel from falling into contradiction with his claim that truth is eternal, but what about his anthropomorphism?

This brings us to our second point, which has to do with Hegel's doctrine of the creation of the world. This doctrine is unfortunately one of Hegel's more abstruse conceptions, and far too complex to go into here in depth. But in general we may say that he interprets the first chapter of the Gospel of John in such a way that creation is "the

begetting of the *Logos* from the beginning, . . . as God's eternal human incarnation" (Diff 171). John writes:

1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God,
and the Word was God. . . .

3 All things were made by him; and without him was not
anything made that was made.

4 In him was life; and the life was the light of men. . . .

14 And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us. . . .

17 . . . and truth came by Jesus Christ [the incarnate Word].³⁶

The Word, or *Logos*, is "God as he is in his eternal essence before creation of nature and finite mind" (LL 50) – but in this *Logos* is life, the life of man. Hence man is the incarnation of the eternal Word, and this incarnation, in Hegel's view, is the creation, "God become man" (F&K 181). That life – human life – is in the Word "from the beginning," means for Hegel that the Creation is not in time (v. PhN §247 *Zusatz*), or rather, that it is the emergence of finite time. The *Logos* does not shape a preexisting chaos, like Plato's Demiurge – a point that some commentators fail to recognize³⁷ – but is inherently and originally creation, the self-revelation of God's activity, his life as Christ, who is the human-divine bearer of truth (v. John 1:17). We can say, then, that truth is eternally anthropomorphic for Hegel *in the sense* of his interpretation of the fourth Gospel – for the human is immanent in the divine *Logos* "from the beginning."³⁸

There has been a long tradition of criticism, beginning with Kierkegaard, Feuerbach, and Marx, to the effect that in Hegel's system truth is an utterance of the disembodied voice of the "Idea," indifferent to concrete human endeavors. Pierre-Jean Labarrière, for example, speaks of the "*dévaluation de l'homme et du monde par surdétermination des valeurs d'éternité . . . [i.e., by the assertion of] l'absoluité de Dieu.*"³⁹ And Klaus Hedwig writes that "Hegel . . . pays a great price in order to secure the ontological foundations of this conception of eternity: . . . Hegel abandons . . . [and] sacrifices the inalienable dignity of the individual."⁴⁰ But in fact Hegel often cautions us against such a misunderstanding. Truth is not abstract but concrete, and this concreteness requires the making-determinate of truth through human culture and human action. This, I take it, is Hegel's meaning when he writes that "the Greeks were anthropomorphic, their gods were humanely constituted; but the deficiency in them is that they were not anthropo-

morphic enough.⁴¹ . . . [This is] because man is not [for the Greeks] divine as man, but only as a far-away form and not as . . . subjective man" (HPh 3:4). And in his *Philosophy of History* Hegel says that "the realm of *Geist* consists in what is produced by man. One may have all sorts of ideas about the Kingdom of God; but it is always a realm of *Geist* to be realized and brought about in man" (RH 20). We must constantly be on guard against being led astray by the language of Hegel's theological commitments, into an interpretation which ignores the fact that this language is always a humanistic language as well.⁴²

(b) Hegel's Panlogistic Interpretation of Truth

Still, while it would be a mistake to read Hegel as leaving human agency out of his account of truth, it would be equally misleading to simply equate his position with the Heideggerian view. Heinrich Heine's belief that the frequently theological tone of Hegel's work is a mere symbolic code which when deciphered reveals a thoroughly atheistic text,⁴³ seems unacceptable. This belief has been adopted by one group of Marxist commentators, whose views are expressed very straightforwardly by Kojève when he proclaims that Hegel's philosophy is "radically atheistic and finitist."⁴⁴ While I am not willing to go quite as far as Werkmeister, who claims that "Hegel's basic orientation, his whole mode of thinking, is essentially religious,"⁴⁵ I do think we are led astray if we do not take Hegel seriously in his repeated assertion that "the Philosophic Idea is the Idea of God" (HPh 3:11). And as for Kojève's characterization of Hegel's philosophy as radically "finitist," we must not forget that the central thrust of Hegel's criticism of Fichte was precisely that by giving the human ego the predominant position in his philosophy, Fichte could never overcome a radical finitude.⁴⁶ But, Hegel says, "to break out of this [Fichtean] circle [of finitude and limitation] is the sole concern of the philosophical need" (Diff 131; and v. pp. 90, 134).

Truth thus involves the superseding of the finite, and the agency of truth must also be in some sense an infinite or eternal subject. This subject is *Logos* – "universal thought," the "absolute *Begriff*," "*nous*," or simply "reason" (Hegel uses all these terms) – and also (or rather, this is the same for Hegel) *God*.⁴⁷ The separation of being and knowing, world and *Logos*, is overcome in God, and history is for Hegel the "uttering" or "articulation" or "progressive unfolding" of this *Logos* in the world. Hegel says at one point that "all philosophy is pantheistic, for it proves that the rational *Begriff* [*Logos*] is in the world" (HPh 2:224, cf. 411).⁴⁸ *Logos*, *nous*, reason, is indeed "the cause of the world"

(SL §8), the "sovereign of the world" (PhH 9), "the infinite and creative . . . principle of all life" (SL §160 *Zusatz*). This sovereignty of the *Logos* is for Hegel the same as to say that history is "God's Work" (PhH 457), that is, that "God rules the world" (HPh 2:24). Marx's characterization of Hegel's philosophy as a "pantheistic mysticism"⁴⁹ is directed precisely against this recurring thread in Hegel's thought.

Hence, just as it is misleading to forget Hegel's humanistic orientation when we see his absorption with theological imagery, it is equally misleading to seek to explain away this religious language in favor of a purely anthropomorphic reading of his philosophy. In Hegel's view, the infinite character of spirit absolutely requires an interpretation of human history which sees man as perpetually in transcendence of himself – which for Hegel inescapably points to a divine, suprasensible character of reality. As he says very pointedly in his lectures on *The Philosophy of Art*, "the world . . . is a suprasensuous world" (ARP 30).

(c) Hegel's Attempted Synthesis of Anthropomorphism and Panlogism

But we should pause before rushing to the conclusion that such an undeniably panlogistic emphasis in Hegel's writings simply cancels out all his talk of the anthropocentricity of the agency of truth. In the just-cited passage from the *Philosophy of Art*, Hegel goes on to say that the suprasensuous character of the world may indeed *appear* to "immediate consciousness" as a "Beyond" – as a reality which stands opposed to the alienated reality of human life: "but," Hegel continues, "mind is able to heal this schism," to see that the divine is not in discord with human reality, but its very manifestation. For Hegel insists over and over again that God is not a "Beyond" – or in other words, God is not a deistic God. God is "self-revealing," which means for Hegel that He exists only as becoming flesh, as incarnation – literally, as becoming man (v. John 1:4, 14). Hence the essence of God "is accomplished in the world, and not in a heavenly kingdom that is 'Beyond'" (HPh 3:21). Hegel's position is that God does not do His Work apart from man, nor even "alongside" man, but only in and through man – i.e., in man as humanity in all its historical unfolding. God is manifest in the human community, and only as thus manifest is He fully actual.⁵⁰

By now we are no doubt in a state of some confusion over how to answer the question of who (or what) is the "agent of truth" in Hegel's philosophy. This much we know: Hegel is like the child alluded to in Plato's *Sophist*,⁵¹ "begging for both"; both the anthropocentric and the panlogistic aspects of truth are crucial to Hegel. But can this "both . . . and" escape inconsistency?

Jean Hyppolite's analysis of Hegel's difficult transition from the *Phenomenology* to the *Logic* is pertinent here, for it (indirectly) addresses the question of the agency of truth, and poses a criticism of Hegel's position to the effect that it is inconsistent. Hyppolite sees this transition as effecting an abandonment of the experience of human consciousness,⁵² and a moving towards the "motion" of pure concepts "in themselves." This move is ultimately illegitimate in Hyppolite's view, precisely because it abandons Hegel's insistence in the *Phenomenology* that the efficacy of truth is anthropocentric.⁵³

Hyppolite argues that we can only make sense of the *Logic* through a reconstruction – the intention of which, in my view, is to cast out Hegel's panlogism altogether. We must "*voyons d'abord que [la Logique] n'est possible que parce que c'est le Soi qui s'est posé comme être*" ["être" or "being" is the first category of the *Logic*].⁵⁴ That is, a category cannot *think itself*, but can only be thought by human consciousness.⁵⁵ Hyppolite seems to feel that this way of seeing the *Logic* is either not Hegel's own position, or, if it is, it is in conflict with his claim that with the *Logic* the experience of consciousness is no longer the center of analysis. But I do not feel that Hegel wants to suggest that in his *Logic*, the concept somehow "thinks itself." For while it is true that in the *Logic* concepts are "abstracted from" (or "freed from": *befreite von*) their temporal appearance in consciousness (PhS 491), they are still the "productions" (*die Hervorbringungen*) of consciousness (PhS 486).⁵⁶ Further, while it is true that Hegel criticizes Descartes and Fichte for beginning their philosophic systems with the self, or "I," and proposes to begin his *Logic* with the more abstract category of Being, we must remember that Hegel never tired of insisting that the *Logic* is itself arrived at and made possible through the *Phenomenology* where the self is of paramount importance (LL 29, 48f). The *Logic* is in this very real sense conditioned upon the self. And if I am right, then by seeing that all truth requires human thought for its actualization, we can avoid the Marxist caricature of Hegel's panlogism as a sort of mysticism.⁵⁷

A good way of seeing how Hegel's panlogistic and anthropocentric emphases are brought into a synthesis is in regard to his theory of the "*List der Vernunft*." Reason or *Logos* has a "secret efficacy" (*geheime Wirksamkeit*) (Diff 95) which transcends the sphere of finite, particular human consciousness, and yet which acts (or is operative) only in and through this sphere. Hegel refers favorably to the "invisible hand" theory of Smith, Say, and Ricardo (e.g., PhR §189 *Anmerkung*), although his own theory of the *List der Vernunft* encompasses much more than the economic realm. The whole course of history is seen as governed by a "world mind," a *Weltgeist*. And while "all actions,

including world-historical actions, culminate with individuals as subjects giving actuality to the substantial [i.e. to the world – to culture, ethics, religion, the state, etc.],” Hegel says that this action of individuals is in *unconscious service* to something larger than their subjective designs and intentions. “Individuals are the living instruments of what is in substance the deed of the *Weltgeist*, . . . [and this larger significance of their deed may be] concealed from them and [need not be] their aim and object” (PhR §348).

An individual is more than the sum of his or her experiences – he or she is in addition something which transcends these experiences and binds them together. So too, Hegel believes, human history is more than the sum of the purposes and deeds of particular individuals. There is in history also a reason or *nous* or *Logos* which binds events into an organic whole, and provides the fabric of interconnectedness for isolated actions. “As parts of the whole,” Hegel says, “individuals are like blind men” – but they are “driven forward by the indwelling spirit of the whole” (HPh 3:553). Hegel, like Augustine, Vico, Montesquieu, Gibbon, Herder, Toynbee, and Marx, to name but a few, finds it impossible to view history as a theater of disconnected events, of sheer contingency and confusion. He believes instead that we can see a universal *Logos* underlying and unifying events.⁵⁸ Hegel thus agrees with Kant that “everything in nature, in the inanimate as well as the animate world, happens according to rules.”⁵⁹ But Hegel goes much further: he uproots this principle from the epistemological context of “empirical realism” that Kant confines it to, and (1) makes it into a historical principle, and (2) claims that this principle is immanent in, or constitutive of, history.⁶⁰

Thus “it is only on the surface [of the world] that the play of contingency prevails – the world is the actualization of . . . the rational, the divine *Logos*” (PhM §396 *Zusatz*; cf. PhN §339 *Zusatz*). But again, this universal must be actualized by individuals. The “actual world as ‘given’ has been transformed by the individual” (PhS 184); the world “perpetually creates itself anew; it is in this . . . advancement that the individual’s work consists” (PhM §396 *Zusatz*).

What does this conception of the *List der Vernunft* tell us about the agency of truth? There is a *Weltgeist* which is the universal (in the sense of “encompassing”) subject of truth, and yet the “work” of this *Logos* is equally the work of individuals, of finite human beings. Individuals “participate,” we might say, in a *Logos* which encompasses them. We can understand this conception better by seeing that for Hegel, human individuals are only in one sense *particular* beings – in a higher sense they are *universal*.⁶¹

Human beings are particular for Hegel *qua* idiosyncrasy, *qua* "natural endowment," and (very importantly for Hegel) *qua* their tendency towards self-absorption (solipsism, narcissism). But it is only "by his share in the collective work that the individual is first really somebody, gaining . . . an objective value" (PhM §396). The individual has a "generic essence" ("*das Individuum ist Gattung*"); the "single person attains his actual and living destiny for universality only as a member . . . of [the] society [of persons]" (PhR §308 *Anmerkung*).

This notion of the *Gattungswesen* of man was taken over from Hegel by Feuerbach and Marx, as well as by Martin Buber and others. Marx, for example, exactly echoes Hegel when he writes that "man in his immediate reality," *qua* "private individual," is an "illusory phenomenon, . . . a mere means and plaything of alien powers."⁶² Thus Marx says that "man, however much he may be a particular individual, . . . is just as much the totality, . . . a communal being."⁶³

Only with what Hegel calls the "sacrifice of particularity" (e.g., PhS 137–39, 212) – the renunciation of one's sense of self as a self-sufficient, essentially isolated being – does one attain an authentic existence. If we appeal always to "an oracle within our own breast," the law of the individual heart, and hence entrench ourselves in a posture of self-sufficiency, then

we are finished and done with anyone who does not agree; we only have to explain that we have nothing more to say to anyone who does not find and feel the same in himself. In other words we trample underfoot the roots of humanity. For it is the nature of humanity . . . to really exist only in an achieved community of minds (PhS 43).

Only in society, where, as Marx puts it, "my own existence is social activity, and therefore what I create for myself I create for society, conscious of myself as a social being,"⁶⁴ can we achieve our authentic humanity, and this authenticity is the self as a "universal self." This universality of the authentic self is expressed in the very nature of action, which is intrinsically public. In Hegel's words, action is the conversion of our "being-for-self" into "being-for-others": "the individual goes beyond himself in his work" (PhS 243); "the individual is for-others, a universal being, in his deed" (PhS 194). "In doing something, [the individual] brings himself out into the light of day," becomes a public being, and "displays what is his own in the element of universality, whereby it becomes, and should become, the affair of everyone" (PhS 251). Action is the necessarily ethical dimension of man, since it is inherently public, and as ethical it implies the universal, communal essence of the individual.

And not only action, which is the expression of our ethical nature and hence of the universal in us, but *thought* in general, directly implies the universal nature of the self. As Kant says, "all knowledge demands a concept; . . . but a concept is always . . . something universal."⁶⁵ Hegel in fact defines thought as "the renunciation of our selfish and particular being" (SL §24 *Zusatz*), and hence as "the activity of the universal self" (PhS 18).⁶⁶

In the final analysis, I think we should say that it is this "universal self," the individual as *Gattungswesen*, that is the agent of truth for Hegel.⁶⁷ This participation in the universal character of reason is a transcendence of the particular being of the individual which unites him with the *Weltgeist*, the *Logos* that guides the world. This unity of man and *Logos* is the work of the *List der Vernunft*, just as the coinciding of the "individual" and "general" wills of such thinkers as Bentham, Rousseau, and Adam Smith is the work of some sort of "invisible hand." Hegel's *List der Vernunft* unites particular and universal whether or not the individual is aware of it, although Hegel argues that the philosophic consciousness (and also the ethical character) of man first becomes explicit with a coming-to-awareness of this unity. With this awareness, man attains to a vision of the identity of himself with the *Logos* of the world. This is Hegel's notion of man become divine, of human action unified with "providence."

When Marx says that "man as man" must be affirmed against Hegel's "man [opposed by] an alien being,"⁶⁸ he forgets that Hegel had written that the "reconciling 'Yea' in which two individuals affirm each other [i.e., the human community] is God manifested" (PhS 409). Further, the thrust of Hegel's whole argument against Kant, Fichte, and Jacobi – as well as against Judaism, we may note – is that they doom man to an unreconciled division between man and God.⁶⁹ Feuerbach writes, again against Hegel, that "man with man, the unity of I and Thou – is God."⁷⁰ But this view is just what I take Hegel's own position to be when he writes of the "reconciling 'Yea'" – with the all-important difference that this does not imply atheism for Hegel, as it does for Feuerbach. It is not an anomalous statement in Hegel's writings when he says that the truth of Christianity is that "the divine nature is the same as the human" (PhS 460). This means for Hegel that we "behold our self in God" (PhS 461), in the elevation of our "particularity" (our egocentrism) to the knowledge of our universal essence (our "species-being"). It is in this sense that he tends to identify "true faith" with reason (e.g., F&K 142). This coinciding of man with the divine *Logos*,

not man alone or *Logos* alone – for ultimately there is no such thing as this aloneness for Hegel – is the locus of the agency of truth in Hegel's philosophy.

This identification of the divine *Logos* with human reason is surely an unorthodox Christian position. As we shall explore in Chapter Six, it is precisely this aspect of Hegel's theological vision that Kierkegaard, for example, credits with effecting an "emasculatation" of Christianity,⁷¹ and that Karl Barth credits with reducing theology to anthropology and atheism.⁷²

But we should not be surprised at Hegel's unorthodoxy. We have already seen, in the first section of the chapter, that Hegel attempts to completely recast the ordinary, commonsense preconception of the nature of truth, so that truth becomes a historical, temporal process of evolution. His theological unorthodoxy is in fact directly connected with this "new way" of viewing truth. Hegel fully intends to preserve the Christian idea that God's Word (or *Logos*) is the voice of Truth, but because of his conviction that truth must be seen as a historical process, this means that God must Himself be actually present in history: "the reconciliation of God with Himself" – that is, the unification of God as eternal and as temporal, as spirit and as flesh – "is accomplished in the world, and not in a heavenly kingdom that is beyond [the world of human history]" (HPh 3:21). The divine Word is not discontinuous with the *Bildung* of human thought in history, but its very expression: the Word is synonymous with and continuous with the discovery by human reason of its historically unfolding destiny.

As we shall see in Chapter Six, this theological aspect of Hegel's grand synthesis, which envisions a harmonization of human and divine thought manifested in the dialectic of historical being, will have important implications for his eschatology. For Hegel will couch his language of the "culmination" of thought and being (in Absolute Knowledge) in the Christian imagery of an "end of all things." I will argue, however, that just as we have seen Hegel to be unorthodox in his appropriation of theological imagery to explicate his theory of truth, so too we must read his appropriation of Christian eschatology in such a way that the Biblical prophesy of the redemption of man from the world of suffering cannot be understood in an apocalyptic way. According to this reading, Hegel's metaphysics of becoming, his diagnosis of the Bacchanalian nature of truth, will preclude any prognosis for human destiny which somehow is to occur beyond human history.

3. The Criterion of Truth: Hegel's Twist on the Correspondence Theory

In the first two sections of this chapter we have been introduced to Hegel's notion that being and thought are inherently processes of becoming. Thought is the historically developing manifestation of truth, and this historical groundedness is equally the temporal evolution of being-in-the-world. In the current section, we will be introduced to Hegel's conception of the unity of being and thought. This conception will be fleshed out more fully in the following chapters, when we discuss Hegel's epistemology more closely; but we will be able to see here that with Hegel's reconstruction of the correspondence theory of truth, the unity of thought and being is made fundamental in his philosophy.

In 1800, just one year before Hegel began his career at the University of Jena, Immanuel Kant published a short work under the title of *Logik*.⁷³ In an important passage, Kant writes the following of truth:

Truth, one says, consists in the agreement of cognition with the object. According to this mere verbal explanation, my cognition, then, in order to pass as true, shall agree with the object. Now I can, however, compare the object with my cognition only by cognizing it. My cognition shall thus confirm itself, which is yet far from sufficient for truth. For since *the object is outside me and the cognition in me*, I can judge only whether my cognition of the object agrees with my cognition of the object. Such a circle of explanation was called by the ancients *diallelus*. . . . The charge was well founded indeed; but the solution of the task in question is completely impossible for anyone.

The problem that Kant sees lying at the heart of the correspondence theory of truth is that the object, being "outside us," is ultimately unreachable by cognition. Hence, we can have no "material" criterion of truth, as Kant puts it⁷⁴ – i.e., no criterion which will allow us to view our propositions as making "ontological commitments" to objects. The only possible criterion of truth, Kant says, is "the agreement of cognition with itself when abstraction is made completely from all objects."⁷⁵

Now Hegel might appear to agree with Kant on this point, for he writes that "truth is the correspondence of objectivity with the *Begriff* [i.e., thought in general] – not of course the correspondence of *external things* with my conceptions, . . . for in the idea we have nothing to do with . . . external things" (SL §213). This is misleading out of context,

however, for in fact Hegel completely disagrees with Kant's analysis of the criterion of truth. Or rather, he agrees that the criterion of truth involves the "agreement of cognition with itself," but not that this entails "complete abstraction from all objects." Hegel says that Kant is "overawed by the object" (LL 51), *intimidated by being*, precisely because he defines it as utterly alien to thought, unreachable by cognition, "in itself" impenetrable by consciousness. But, Hegel claims, in thinking the object, "I penetrate it, and it ceases to stand over against me" (PhR §4 *Zusatz*). This fundamental principle of Hegel's grand synthesis, that thought "penetrates" being and in this act removes the appearance of estrangement and discord between consciousness and object, means that being has no ultimate subsistence apart from its appropriation by thought, but first emerges from the darkness and alien-ness of its externality when it is given meaning by thought. In the passage above, where Hegel says that the criterion of truth does not involve the correspondence of thought with "external things," his point is that there is ultimately no such thing as a purely external thing: precisely in being an object of thought, the object cannot be "external to thought," if by "external" we mean wholly alien, unreachable.⁷⁶

We need, Hegel believes, to return to a less pessimistic point of view as regards the accessibility of objects to consciousness, to a pre-Kantian conception of the criterion of truth, where thought and thing correspond. He writes of the "ancient metaphysicians" – both Plato and Hegel's nonempiricist Aristotle (and the following remarks apply equally to the seventeenth-century rationalists) – that they

had a higher conception of thinking than is current today. For it based itself on the fact that the knowledge of things obtained through thinking is alone what is really true in them, i.e. things not in their immediacy [*an sich*] but . . . as things *thought* [*Dinge . . . als Gedachte*]. Thus this metaphysics believed that thinking is not anything alien to the object, but rather is its essential nature (LL 45).

Against the alien object, being-in-itself cut off from being-for-consciousness, Hegel reiterates the basic proposition of all idealism that "what is, or the in-itself, only is in so far as it is for-consciousness" (PhS 140). The truth of things, in short, is the "thing *thought*." No simpler equation than this could be formulated to express the goal of Hegel's grand synthesis.

Kant claims that we can have knowledge only of objects of sensible experience, and that this knowledge is only of appearances, not of

things as they are in themselves. He also says that "while we cannot know these objects as things in themselves, we must yet be in a position at least to *think* them; otherwise we should be landed in the absurd conclusion that there can be appearance without anything that appears."⁷⁷ Hegel's retort is that the real absurdity enters when we suppose that something can appear without showing itself. The philosophic attitude which enshrines a fundamental barrier between thought and being, forcing thought back upon the subjective world of appearance with no way to reach out to the objective world of being except through the mists of illusion, is a form of epistemological disease, for which Hegel seeks a therapeutic cure in his project of a grand synthesis of thought and being. "It marks the diseased state of the age," Hegel says,

when we see it adopt the despairing creed that our knowledge is only subjective, and that beyond this subjective we cannot go. Whereas, rightly understood, truth is objective: . . . [i.e.,] *to think is to bring out the truth of our object* (SL §22 Zusatz).

It is Hegel's view that appearance (*das Erscheinen*) must be understood as more than a "mere show" (*Schein*), and certainly not as a "second object" emerging from the "original" *Ding an sich* which keeps itself veiled. Appearance is the shining-forth of essence: "the appearance shows nothing that is not in the essence, and in the essence there is nothing but what is manifested" (SL §139).⁷⁸ Hegel, the German Idealist, here echoes Aquinas, the Catholic Aristotelian, who made it a cornerstone of his metaphysics that "that which *manifests* is convertible with the *manifested*."⁷⁹ We can have a "material" criterion of truth, then, so long as we don't regard the object as utterly alien, an "out there" with no way to "get in" past the gates of thought.

For Kant, the price of admission past these gates is that the object loses the integrity, the purity, of its in-itself-ness. Hence, what "gets in" to thought is not what was (and remains) "out there." Appearance is the distortion of essence for Kant; appearance and essence are two things of foreign lineage to each other, with no way to translate their differences into a common language. There simply is no language to describe essence or being (in-itself).

Hegel seeks a wholly different way of regarding the epistemological relation of subject to object which will resolve this Kantian predicament. To cite again the passage from his *Encyclopædia* with which we began this chapter, Hegel is seeking nothing less than "a new way, quite the opposite of previous ways," of "becoming

acquainted . . . with our thought" (SL §19). This new way has to do with his metaphysical recasting of the essence-appearance distinction. This is at the heart of the rift between Hegelian and Kantian metaphysics and epistemology, and will be a central topic of our next chapter. Much must be said there to uncover the arguments Hegel uses to fortify his (nontranscendental, i.e., non-Kantian) idealist position, but we can anticipate here by saying that the crucial issue for Hegel is the role of *the alteration of the object by thought*. That thought alters its object in the act of thinking is just what drove Kant to posit a barrier between thought and being (in itself). Hegel's move is in exactly the opposite direction – to regard alteration as the necessary condition for grasping the object as it is in itself! He expresses this remarkable doctrine with brash simplicity in his *Encyclopædia*, in a passage which, as we shall see in Chapter Three, holds the key to the secret of Hegel's grand synthesis (in its epistemological dimension): "an alteration must be interposed before the true nature of the object can be discovered" (SL §22).

Thus far we have seen that Hegel wishes to resurrect the correspondence theory of truth from the damage he saw done to it by the Kantian critical philosophy. But Hegel institutes a "twist" in the correspondence theory. In the fashion that is so typical of him, and which is the despair of the beginning reader, Hegel consciously undermines his frequent endorsement of the correspondence theory by an equally frequent penchant to argue *against* adopting this traditional criterion of truth (e.g., HPh 2:150f; 3:312; SL §41).⁸⁰ We already have seen a hint of this twist, when Hegel says that truth does not involve the correspondence of thought with "external things" because the object as "given" is always already given for-consciousness. The question of the meaning of an object would never even arise if the object were not being thought. And this identity of being with thought (being which is always being for-consciousness) belies the term "external" in any ultimate sense.

What then is Hegel's revised version of the criterion of truth? He writes in his "shorter" *Logic*:

We must understand clearly what we mean by truth. In common life truth means the agreement of an object with our conception of it. We thus presuppose an object [i.e., regard an object as "given," as a "brute datum"] to which our conception must conform. In the philosophical sense of the word, on the other hand, truth may be described . . . as *the agreement of a thought-content with itself* (SL §24 *Zusatz*).

Two rather surprising circumstances may be remarked upon here. First, it should not escape our attention how remarkably close Hegel is to Kant in taking exception to the ordinary correspondence criterion of truth (compare the long quote from Kant's *Logic* on p. 28 above). And second, we should note how close Hegel seems to come to taking precisely the way out of this problem with the correspondence theory that Kant had called "far from sufficient for truth, . . . a *diallelus*." As regards both of these points, we will see how misleading this closeness to Kant is. For while this is no illusory proximity, Hegel's final divergence from Kant is dramatic.

Let us recall Kant's words, cited above:

. . . I can compare the object with my cognition only by cognizing it. My cognition thus shall confirm itself, which is yet far from sufficient for truth. For since the object is outside me and the cognition in me, I can judge only whether my cognition of the object agrees with my cognition of the object. . . .

Hegel's own analysis of the "celebrated definition of truth, by which it is made the harmony of object and consciousness," addresses the same problem.

It is well to remark that this [celebrated definition] is not to be understood as indicating that consciousness had a conception, and that on the *other side* stood an object, which had to harmonize one with the other. [For then we would need a *third term* to compare the two, and] . . . this would be consciousness itself. But what consciousness can compare is nothing more than its conception, and – not the object, but – its conception again.

It is not, as is ordinarily represented, that an object here impresses itself upon wax [the passive, receptive subject], that a *third something* compares the form of the object and of the wax, and finding them to be similar, judges that the impress must have been correct, and the concept and the thing have harmonized. . . . *For the truth of the object itself is that it corresponds to thought, and not the thought to the object* (HPH 2:251f; and cf. HPH 2:150).

This last sentence echoes Kant's "Copernican Revolution" virtually to the word.⁸¹ And this is the sense in which Hegel parallels so closely Kant's own criticism of the traditional criterion of truth. But the key to the passage is found in the first sentence, where Hegel says that we must not see the epistemological relation in Kant's terms, where "the

object is outside me," or "on the other side," if we are to avoid the *diallelus* Kant rightly sees as arising from this picture. Hegel thus accepts what Kant finds unsatisfactory, that "cognition thus shall confirm itself": Hegel says in his *Phenomenology* that "the criterion and what is to be tested are present in consciousness itself" (PhS 55), and that "consciousness provides its own criterion from within itself, so that the investigation becomes a comparison of consciousness with itself" (PhS 53). But he denies that this entails a "circle of explanation," as Kant charges. For, as we have seen, the truth of the object is for Hegel the "thing *thought*," and the "thing thought" is something within consciousness, not on "another side." This is what Hegel means by saying that truth is the "agreement of a thought-content with itself," for both sides of the epistemological relation – subject and object – are by this account on "the same side."

We must now ask whether or not Hegel brings in "a third something," beyond the cognition and the object, which is to test their correspondence, despite his criticism of this picture of the criterion of truth. Hegel criticizes Locke's adoption of the traditional criterion of truth, where "truth merely signifies the harmony of our conceptions with things," by saying that "it is quite another matter to investigate the *content* itself, and to ask 'Is this which is within us true?'" (HPH 3:312).⁸² This question is in fact an important key to Hegel's whole method – a key, that is, to how he presents the necessary development from a preliminary stage (of consciousness, of history, of categories of logic, etc.) to a higher stage. The question is in effect a hermeneutic principle in Hegel's philosophy, since it calls for an interpretation of the content of thought as it is present in consciousness. But if this is so, isn't Hegel calling in a "third thing" – apart from the cognition and its object – to do the comparing? Let us look at an example of his hermeneutic principle in action, to see how this question should be answered.

In the "Sense-Certainty" (*sinnliche Gewißheit*) chapter of his *Phenomenology*, Hegel presents the criterion of truth employed by this form of consciousness (naive realism)⁸³ as being the immediate correspondence of a given, brute datum, a "'this'-'here'-'now,'" with our sensible perception of it. Then he says:

The question must now be considered whether in sense-certainty itself the object is in fact the kind of essence that sense-certainty proclaims it to be [i.e., a "'this'-'here'-'now'"]; whether this notion of it as the essence corresponds to the way it is present in sense-certainty (PhS 59).

It turns out, for Hegel, that when we ask how the "'this'-here-'now'" is actually present in our perceptual experience, we find that there is no such thing. Sheer particularity is an illusion, the "'this'-here-'now'" vanishes as soon as it is uttered or thought. Hence sense-certainty's notion, or definition, of its object (as the brute datum) does not correspond to the way the object is in fact experienced. In being thought, the object is already a universal, mediated by generic concepts.

The question that Hegel asks in the above passage (PhS 59) preserves his idea that the criterion of truth is the correspondence of a thought-content with itself. But it seems to ask us, the reader (or more exactly, the "philosophic reader," "we who reflect on the process" [PhS 59]), to assess whether a thought meets the criterion of truth. Hegel, however, feels that this assessment does "not involve any alteration [of the subject in question], for we do not import into it our own subjective ideas and fancies: . . . we merely look on" (PhM §379 *Zusatz*). That is, consciousness will *internally* experience the disparity or inconsistency within its conception of the object: "Immediate consciousness will show itself . . . not to be real knowledge," and "consciousness suffers this violence at its own hands: it spoils its own limited satisfaction" (PhS 49, 51).

Hegel certainly does not claim that this self-correction on the part of consciousness is a mechanical, algorithmic process. We must always remember that truth is something we win through to, as the result of a laborious path of discovery. In fact consciousness always "directly takes itself to be real knowledge" (PhS 59) – it does not at first doubt its way of viewing things. Hegel is convinced, it is true, that in the attempt to take one's beliefs seriously, our own experience will undermine those beliefs insofar as they are inconsistent with that experience. In the present case, when consciousness comes to discover that it never in fact experiences a "'this'-here-'now'" – for "'this'-here-'now'" instantly "evaporates," as it were, through the unavoidable temporality of perception – it discovers that it must revise its notion of the object of perception. But Hegel never says that we cannot cling to an internally inconsistent way of viewing things, although he does say that this is a deception and that our experience will constantly cause us anxiety over such beliefs. This self-deception is brought about in cases where we value the security and safety of holding on to our convictions and beliefs over the risk of self-examination and change. Hence, Hegel believes that an even greater threat to philosophy than scepticism – which is constantly taking accepted truths to task and examining their presuppositions – is "the

conceit that will not argue [at all]. . . . This conceit relies on truths which are taken for granted and which it sees no need to re-examine" (PhS 41).

Hegel's "philosophic spectator" is brought in to "look on," to describe what consciousness itself verifies in every act of reflection on its experience. Now this act of reflection by consciousness might itself be called a "third thing." But if it is, then Kant's own philosophy must be seen as committing the same illicit move. For Kant says that his conception of "criticism" amounts to an internal criticism by reason of itself: "For pure reason has this peculiarity, that it can measure its powers according to the different ways in which it chooses the objects of its thinking."⁸⁴ Criticism is reason "dealing . . . only with itself and the problems which arise entirely from within itself," and involves "reason [coming to] learn and understand its own power."⁸⁵ For both Kant and Hegel, human consciousness is an intrinsically self-reflective activity. This reflection on its experience is hence no "third thing," but the very essence of consciousness in its act of thinking its object.⁸⁶ Hegel's hermeneutic principle, like Kant's critical faculty of reason, is internal to consciousness, not imposed from the outside, except in the sense that it is also the principle which guides Hegel's description of consciousness in the writing of his texts.⁸⁷

This at any rate is Hegel's view of the matter. And it is what makes his way of seeing the criterion of truth cogent. Again, Hegel provisionally accepts the traditional criterion of correspondence, but reconstructs it in such a way that the object is defined as the "thing thought," so that both sides of the comparison are internal to consciousness. This is not the comparison of "my cognition of the object with my cognition of the object," as Kant says it would have to be, but the comparison of my immediate conception of the object with the content or "essence" of the "thing thought," which content is progressively uncovered through consciousness' thinking through its experience of the object.⁸⁸ Seen in the light of this internal criteriology, the Hegelian grand synthesis may be described as the project of bringing being "inside" the compass of thought as it reflects on its experience, or of thought "penetrating" the external appearance of being so as to reconcile the opposition and discord of mind and world. True, this opposition will perpetually recur, since spirit is a continually evolving process of reaching beyond its achieved harmony of thought and being, and every new experience will necessarily emerge in discord, with consciousness finding its world standing over against it. But this experience of alienation is nothing other than the recurring challenge to thought to transform its world, to recognize that the world of being

has no ultimate existence apart from thought, and to initiate the act of investing the new world of being with a meaning which harmonizes with the goals and strivings of mind.

Chapter Three

THE "RIDDLE AND PROBLEM" OF KNOWLEDGE

It is hard to be sure whether one knows or not.

Aristotle, Posterior Analytics

In Chapter Two we saw that Hegel views truth both as a temporal, historical process of becoming, and as the unity of consciousness and world, or thought and being. In the present chapter, I wish to expand on the second of these two central themes by taking a closer look at Hegel's theory of knowledge. In this epistemological dimension of Hegel's grand synthesis, we will be investigating the unification of thought and being in terms of the cognitive unity of subject and object. As with every other fact of Hegelian harmony, it will be important to see that the unity of subject and object is a unity which arises out of a process of discord. There is no direct, immediate apprehension of the true essence of things for Hegel, and genuine philosophic or scientific knowledge emerges only as a result of a pathway of struggle which is marked by the perpetual falling asunder of provisional feelings of certainty. There is no "royal road to science," no "easy-going way" to knowledge (PhS 43): knowledge is indeed first of all a *problem* – a "riddle" or "puzzle," to use Hegel's words – and the solution to this problem is by no means algorithmic or straightforward. In the present chapter, we will see how Hegel looks very carefully (although, to be sure, sometimes quite polemically) at various approaches to this problem, emphasizing the theory which he perceived as representing the greatest challenge to his own, that of Kant. In the course of our analysis, we will investigate the way in which Hegel works through

to his own solution to the riddle of knowledge through his absolute idealist reconstruction of the age-old essence-appearance distinction, and the epistemological criterion of truth which he derives from this reconstruction.

In the period from 1795 to 1800, Hegel was composing what have become known as his "early theological writings."¹ Had Hegel been struck by cholera at the age of thirty (in 1800) instead of at the age of sixty-one, he would have been remembered, if he was remembered at all, partly as an obscure and somewhat unorthodox Kantian and partly as a precursor of Kierkegaard. In these writings, Hegel echoes Kant's double claim that (1) since human reason is inevitably led to illusions when it seeks to transcend the sphere of finite appearances, (2) we must take this intrinsic limitation of knowledge to heart, and when we turn to questions of the ultimate nature of things, we should "deny knowledge, in order to make room for faith."² Hegel writes in 1800:

Philosophy has to stop short of religion, because it is a process of thinking and, as such a process, implies . . . the opposition between the thinking mind and the object of thought. Philosophy has to disclose the finiteness in all finite things and require their synthesis by means of reason. [But] it *must recognize the illusions generated by its own infinite and thus place the true infinite outside its confines* (FrSys 313).³

Hegel goes on to call the activity of reason a "false" or "bad infinite," and to describe religious faith as the true "elevation of the finite to the infinite." Faith, he says, is the only possibility of achieving an "integration" and "unity" with the Absolute (FrSys 317).

In 1798-1799, in *The Spirit of Christianity and its Fate*, Hegel's view of the capacity of reason was even harsher. His scepticism about the ability of reason to know even finite objects (Kant's "phenomena") with certainty, and his emphasis on faith as the only possible condition for overcoming the alienation created by this "objective uncertainty" of reason, may remind us today of Kierkegaard. Hegel writes in this work that "there can be no question of a correspondence in knowledge" between any two persons (SXty 279), and that "[between] the hill and the eye which sees it," there is "an [impassable] cleft of objectivity and subjectivity" (SXty 265). T. S. Eliot, in *The Hollow Men*, writes:

Between the idea
And the reality

Between the motion
And the act
Falls the Shadow.

For Hegel, one might say that this shadow which falls between idea and reality, between the eye of the mind and the hill it perceives, is the veil of obscurity which inescapably darkens the eye of reason in its search for knowledge. But while reason is Eliot's "hollow man," groping impotently in this darkness and shadow-world, faith has the power to redeem us from our estrangement and discord, granting us a "feeling of harmony" and initiating a "living link or bond" between man and man, man and world, and man and God (SXty 246, 255ff, 264, 266, 271, 273; cf. Lv 305). Reason speaks the language of "opposition," while faith expresses "unity" (Lv 305).

While the problem of the overcoming of opposition – between I and Thou, subject and object, man and God – that Hegel addresses in these early writings remained a chief concern throughout his life (this is indeed Hegel's lifelong project of a grand synthesis of self and world), already by 1801⁴ his attitude towards how this unity is to be secured had altered drastically. Thus he writes in his *Difference* essay that it is the "task of philosophy [and hence of reason] . . . to unite . . . finitude and infinity . . . [and] to construct the Absolute for consciousness" (Diff 93, 94). Reason is resurrected, faith displaced (although not by any means abolished or demeaned). In 1807 Hegel boldly writes that "reason is the consciousness of the certainty of being all truth . . . and all reality" (PhS 138f). This passage is from the *Phenomenology*, a work that tells the story of the liberation of consciousness from scepticism through the dialectical progression of knowledge to the point where "otherness . . . [ultimately] vanishes for consciousness" (PhS 140), that is, "the point at which consciousness gets rid of its semblance of being burdened with something alien" (PhS 56). In recognizing itself in what is other, human knowledge has found its element – its "Aether" as Hegel calls it (PhS 14, 491) – in which there is no ultimate other, no final division between mind and world, thought and being, subject and object.⁵ Philosophy, the organ of reason, has replaced faith, the organ of feeling, as the locus of Hegel's vision of a grand synthesis.

But we have jumped to the conclusion of Hegel's epistemology, without treading the path he follows to get there. Knowledge does become "absolute" for Hegel, to be sure, but it is first of all a *problem*. As noted in Chapter Two, Hegel very much feels that we must commence our epistemological inquiries in the spirit of Wittgenstein's dic-

tum that "*ein philosophisches Problem hat die Form: 'Ich kenne mich nicht aus.'*" "Philosophy," Hegel says, "must begin with a puzzle" (HPh 1:406). In this chapter I will begin with a portrayal of how Hegel poses the problem of knowledge, before turning to discuss his dissatisfaction with various proposed solutions. I will then move to an analysis of his own proposal, and finally to a presentation of the idealist position that is its consequence.

1. The Problem Itself

In his *Philosophy of Nature*, Hegel distinguishes among three ways of considering the relationship between human consciousness and the world of nature. The first two are what he calls (somewhat misleadingly) the "practical" and the "theoretical" approaches, corresponding roughly to what he refers to elsewhere as the "false idealism" of Kant and the "naive realism" he associates with (Newtonian) physics. The third approach is the "speculative" or simply the "philosophic" approach, that is, Hegel's own solution. In this current section we will discuss the first two approaches only, which together lead us to what Hegel calls the "riddle and problem" of the possibility of an objective knowledge of the world (PhN, Introductory *Zusatz*).

The "theoretical" approach to nature is concerned with apprehending the "universal aspect of nature," its "forces, laws and genera" as they exist in themselves in the world (PhN §246 *Zusatz*). Its intention and its method is to "stand back from natural objects, leaving them as they are and adjusting ourselves to them," and its *point d'appui* and *point de départ* is sense experience (PhN §246 *Zusatz*). There is, however, an internal tension in this approach between its desire to observe the universal laws of nature as they are in themselves and its *point d'appui*. For, Hegel argues, it is only by conceptual thought, or "ideation," that we can grasp the universal, and not by sense-perception.⁶ This tension creates further problems, for "the more *thought*⁷ enters into our representation of things, the less do they retain their 'naturalness,' their singularity and immediacy" (PhN §246 *Zusatz*). The theoretical approach is in fact hoisted by its own petard, for (1) while it wants to know what nature is in itself, (2) the only way to grasp the universal characteristics of nature is by forfeiting sense-knowledge and turning to conceptualization as the means of grasping this universality; but then (3) "instead of simply perceiving nature, we make it into something different: in *thinking* things, we *transform* them into something universal" (PhN §246 *Zusatz*).

The "practical" approach takes its cue from the just-mentioned points (2) and (3), which it accepts, and seeks its solution to the possibility of knowing nature by rejecting (1). That is, it asserts that nature as it is in itself is "absolutely shut to us" and hence cannot be the object of our knowledge (PhN §246 *Zusatz*). It is our very activity of conceptualization that gives unity to nature and allows us to grasp its laws; our concepts are the "lawgivers of nature," as Kant puts it.⁸ This is point (2) above, which leads us to (3), from which the conclusion is drawn that it is not objects as they exist in themselves that we know, but only as they appear to us through the medium of our thought-determinations.

While Hegel does not mention Kant by name in the discussion of the "practical" approach to nature in his *Philosophy of Nature*, it is clearly Kant that he has in mind here. In the Introduction to his *Phenomenology* Hegel sets forth the reasoning behind this approach in a succinct way (see PhS 46–48).⁹ Since knowledge is an "instrument" or "medium" through which we grasp objects (the argument goes), our cognition "refracts" or "transforms" its object in the very act of apprehending it. Further, we cannot eliminate this refraction, so as to get at the truth of the object in itself, without at once eliminating our only means to know the object. Hence, knowledge of the *Ding an sich* is impossible. But this does not mean that we can have no knowledge at all. Since the forms and categories of our knowledge are themselves lawlike, the "refracted" experience of the world is not arbitrary or chaotic, but is itself immediately shaped into universal and necessary patterns. Thus we must be willing to pay the price of not being able to know the world as it is in itself, but we get in return a universal and necessary knowledge of the world as it *appears* to us through the medium of our perceptual and conceptual consciousness.

For Hegel, however, this approach only further confirms the "riddle and problem" of the possibility of objective knowledge. For the price we pay involves a bartering-off of precisely what we were searching for; we want to know the world, not our thought about the world.¹⁰ This approach "is like attributing to someone a correct perception," Hegel says, "with the rider that nevertheless he is incapable of perceiving what is true. . . . Absurd as this would be, it would not be more so than a true knowledge which did not know the object as it is in itself" (LL 46). The Kantian epistemology utterly precludes the grand synthesis of thought and being which is the central motivation of Hegel's philosophy, by exiling being into a world lying completely beyond the reaches of thought.

We will discuss Hegel's criticism of Kant's epistemology more fully

in section 2. The conclusion he draws about both the "theoretical" and the "practical" approaches to nature in his *Philosophy of Nature*, however, is that neither of them are capable of answering the "riddle and problem" concerning knowledge of the world: "*How do we, as subjects, come into contact with objects?*" (PhN §246 Zusatz). The theoretical approach cannot reconcile its two desiderata, to let nature simply present itself as it is in itself, and to grasp nature in terms of its universal laws – for the universal is contributed by consciousness, not served up ready-to-hand by events in the world. And the practical approach, in order to make good the second desideratum, gives up the first, but thereby gives away what we were looking for, namely, some means of "contact with objects." The practical approach substitutes for this "contact with objects" contact with our thought or perception of the object, which yields only the "refracted" object.

2. Hegel's Solution to the Problem

a. Criticisms of Kant

Hegel believes that if the "theoretical" and "practical" approaches to the "riddle and problem" of knowledge were the only alternatives, we would be condemned to scepticism, a breach between thought and being which no effort of science or philosophy or religion could hope to mend. Before turning to a discussion of his own attempted resolution to the riddle of knowledge, which is meant to liberate us once and for all from scepticism, it would be well to look a bit more closely at Hegel's analysis of Kant's proposed solution. For Hegel's epistemology is in constant debate with Kant's. We may say, in fact, that Kant did for Hegel what Hume did for Kant – awoke him from his dogmatic slumbers.

i. The Kantian Critical Philosophy as Scepticism

The "practical" or Kantian approach to nature leads us to scepticism, in Hegel's view, because the consequence of the Kantian "Copernican Revolution" requires, as Kant says, that "our *a priori* knowledge of reason . . . has to do only with *appearances*, and must leave the thing in itself as indeed real *per se*, but as not known by us."¹¹ This is virtually Hegel's very definition of scepticism. He writes in the "Scepticism" section of his *History of Philosophy* that "scepticism consummates the theory of the subjectivity of all knowledge by the fact that in knowledge it universally substitutes for *being* the expression

appearance" (HPh 2:328). The rationale for this substitution is again the same, in Hegel's view, in both the Kantian and sceptical philosophies: it is because our faculty of knowledge unavoidably transforms or alters its object that we can have no access to being, the *Ding an sich*.

Sextus Empiricus says of scepticism that it seeks to refute the possibility of any criterion of objective knowledge on the grounds that any criterion we choose "could not be without an affection [$\pi\alpha\theta\omicron\varsigma$] of consciousness."¹² Hegel explains this sceptical position as asserting that (1) since any criterion of objective knowledge must itself involve the activity of consciousness (e.g., perception or conception), and that (2) "this activity of consciousness consists in the fact that it *changes* the object, and thus does not allow the objective as it is in itself to come to use," then (3) we can have no knowledge of the object as it is in itself, due to the very nature of our activity of consciousness (HPh 2:321f).

Hegel seeks to show that this sceptical argument is paralleled in Kant's philosophy, since Kant argues that (1) we can have knowledge only of objects of possible experience, but (2) these objects are directly and immediately transformed by our intuitional and conceptual representations of them, hence (3) there can be no knowledge of things as they are in themselves. And this does indeed seem substantially of a spirit with the sceptic's argument summarized above. It is customary to regard Kant's philosophy – as he did himself – as going beyond scepticism, in that it provides for objective knowledge by seeking to show how the transformational character of our activity of consciousness is itself lawlike, universal, and necessary – so that we have an objective knowledge of appearances. For Hegel, however, this is not an overcoming of scepticism but a capitulation to it, a resignation to the world of *maya* at the expense of the reality of being.

ii. The Basic Issue: Is Alteration a Distortion?

The central epistemological issue between Hegel and Kant has to do with the alteration of the object by consciousness in its activity of thinking that object. Both Kant and Hegel accept this altering activity as a fact, but while for Kant this is what creates an ultimate barrier between thought and being (in itself), for Hegel it is just this transforming and recasting of the object by consciousness which allows the essence of the object to "shine forth" or appear in its true light. What I wish to do in the remainder of the present section (2a) is to take a closer look at Hegel's interpretation of the role of alteration in knowledge; at his questioning of the Kantian view of knowledge as a medium or instrument; and at his criticism of the Kantian *Ding an sich*. This will

allow us to develop Hegel's own positive solution to the riddle and problem of knowledge, for this solution is constantly proffered by Hegel in terms of a contrast with the Kantian position.

In the opening passage of the Introduction to his *Phenomenology* Hegel writes:

It is a natural assumption that in philosophy, before we start to deal with its proper subject-matter, viz. the actual cognition of what truly is, one must first of all come to an understanding about cognition, which is regarded either as the *instrument* [*das Werkzeug*] by which we are to get hold of the Absolute,¹³ or as the *medium* [*das Mitte*] through which one discovers it. . . . [This assumption leads to] the conviction that the whole project of securing for consciousness through cognition what exists *in itself* is absurd, and that there is a *boundary* between cognition and the Absolute that completely separates them.

For if cognition is the *instrument* for getting hold of absolute being, it is obvious that the use of an instrument on a thing certainly does not let it be what it is for itself, but rather sets out to *reshape and alter it*. . . . [Or if cognition is described as a] more or less passive *medium* through which the light of truth reaches us, then again we do not receive the truth as it is in itself, but only as it exists in and through this medium (PhS 46).

It is fitting that the opening passage of the *Phenomenology* directly immerses us in the Kantian epistemology (although, as with the passage from the *Philosophy of Nature*, Hegel never mentions Kant by name here). Hegel regarded this epistemology as the single most pointed challenge to his absolute idealism. His analysis of this "natural assumption" (which Kant makes the central principle of his critical method) is that it "immediately brings about the opposite of its own end" (PhS 46), which is the "actual cognition of what truly is."¹⁴ We fall into a "fear of error," seeing that our cognition alters and hence distorts its object, whereas "this fear of error is the error itself, . . . [for it] takes a great deal for granted . . . [in supposing that] cognition is an instrument or medium, . . . and above all that the Absolute stands on one side and cognition on the other . . . " (PhS 47).¹⁵

This "error," or untenable presupposition, that cognition is a medium (which therefore distorts and separates it from its object), has been alluded to already in Chapter Two. There we saw that Kant disclaims the possibility of any "material criterion of truth" because there is this ultimate separation of the object which is "outside me"

from the cognition which is "in me." Hegel's point here in the *Phenomenology* is that this separation is inevitable if we view cognition as an instrument or medium, but that this view is an unwarranted assumption. Hence, it becomes his task to expose what Merold Westphal calls the "fundamental fearfulness" and "anxiety" of the critical philosophy – the fear of not being able to grasp the object of knowledge in its reality – as an ungrounded fear.¹⁶

I do not feel that Hegel definitively proves that this is an unwarranted assumption and ungrounded fear, although I do feel that he goes a long way towards showing that it is only an assumption. Similarly, Hegel's alternative does not seem to me to possess the necessity he attaches to it, although its merit is striking, for it provides a way of looking at knowledge which escapes the sceptical rejoinder to which Kant's position is open. For if alteration of the object no longer spells the distortion and consequent loss of the essence of the object, but rather provides the very light requisite to uncover that essence, the sceptic loses his surest foothold.

Hegel's basic strategy in opposing the view of cognition as a medium or instrument which necessarily distorts the essential nature of objects (in themselves), is to rethink the significance of the altering activity of consciousness. He several times employs the analogy of a ray of light to illustrate his point – a ray of light is to its refraction by a surface as the thing in itself is to the activity of consciousness. Thus in his "shorter" *Logic* he writes that the essence first comes to light through the activity of reflection [*die Reflexion*], and he goes on to describe this activity in the following way:

The word "reflection" is originally applied when a ray of light in a straight line impinging upon a surface of a mirror is thrown back from it. In this phenomenon we have two things – first an immediate fact which is, and secondly the deputed, derivated, or transmuted phase of the same.

Something of this sort takes place when we reflect, or think upon an object; for here we want to know the object, not in its immediacy, but as derivative or mediated.

The problem or aim of philosophy . . . is the ascertainment of the essence of things: a phrase which only means things, instead of being left in their immediacy, must be shown to be mediated by or based upon something else (SL §112 *Zusatz*).

Hegel's point is that knowledge first arises with reflection. As Plato says, "It is in the course of reflection, if at all, that the soul gets

a clear view of facts."¹⁷ To lament the absence of a knowledge of the object prior to such reflection is a naive form of regret. For prior to reflection, the object is not "based on anything," signifying only a "blank space" (PhS 47), a chimeric supposition. We might, of course, reply that the object is based on itself (self-grounded). But we would have to admit that we could not say what this means, since the supposed self-grounding of the object is definitionally beyond the scope of our knowledge. But then this supposed conception (of a self-grounded object) is not a conception at all, for concepts belong to knowledge, and we are not supposed to have any knowledge of the self-grounded object.¹⁸

I believe that this is essentially Wittgenstein's point when he argues that to claim a conception of something without being able to explain what it means is absurd.¹⁹ Since an object can only be given a content for consciousness, and hence defined, in terms of its presence to our cognition – any other definition would be based on nothing at all – the object in itself, if it is anything at all, is necessarily mediated by our reflection on it. If the object cannot be made present to consciousness – which Kant says of the object *an sich* – then it is unwarranted to regard it as an object at all.

Kant writes that "there is something strange and even absurd in the assertion that there should be a concept which possesses a meaning and yet is not capable of any explanation."²⁰ Although Hegel never calls attention to this passage (so far as I know), he would feel that in it Kant is unwittingly condemning himself to absurdity. For Kant says that if a concept cannot "be made sensible," or "given an object . . . in empirical intuition . . . to which it applied," then that concept "has no meaning and is completely lacking in content."²¹ But the noumenon, or *Ding an sich*, is precisely such a concept, by Kant's own repeated definition of it!

iii. The *Ding an sich* as *Caput Mortuum*

The *Ding an sich* is for Hegel a "*caput mortuum*" (SL §44 *Anmerkung*; HPh 3:427), a "formless lump" (F&K 76) or "empty substratum" (SL §124 *Anmerkung*), a "spectral . . . abstract shadow divorced from all content" (LL 47). It is an opaque "expression of the object when we leave out of sight all that consciousness makes of it: [but then] . . . it is easy to see what is left – utter abstraction, total emptiness, . . . a [fictitious] 'other-world' – the negative of every image and definite thought" (SL §44).²²

Aristotle criticized Plato for "duplicating" the world, positing on the one hand the thing as it appears to us, and on the other the essence or *eidos* of the thing which "exists apart" from the appearance, and has no

"immanent connection" with the appearance.²³ And Berkeley criticized Locke for "supposing a two-fold existence" of things, "the one intelligible" – that is, the being of objects for-consciousness – and the other an "essential reality" which is independent of our consciousness of it.²⁴ So too Hegel criticizes Kant for presenting a "bifurcated world" where essence and appearance, being *an sich* and being *für Bewußtsein*, are alien to each other (see e.g., Diff 163f; F&K 75, 92ff; SL §§6, 22 Zusatz, 41 & Zusatz, 45 & Zusatz, 226; PhM §415 & Anmerkung; LL 45, 63). Mere being in itself, abstracted from all possible determinations of thought, is an *empty category* for Hegel (v. HPh 3:448; F&K 221; SL §§85ff; LL 75, 82ff),²⁵ and the Kantian "world beyond our experience" is an *empty world*. Revealingly, Kant himself comes close to saying this, as for example when he writes that "we are unable to comprehend how such noumena can be possible, and the domain that lies out beyond the sphere of appearances is for us empty."²⁶

That Kant interjects the phrase "for us" (*für uns*) when he says that the noumenal world is "*für uns leer*," indicates his desire to hold out for a positive content of noumena. But, Hegel feels, Kant is hard-pressed to explain why we must hold out for this possibility. That is, when Kant speaks of the noumenal world as the "unknown ground of phenomena,"²⁷ or as a "negative conception"²⁸ – i.e., a conception which has no positive content for knowledge, but which is "abstracted from" all our means of knowing objects as they appear – he is ushering in a bifurcated world which has absolutely no support from anything we can know, explain, or describe in such a way as to give it an actual content.

I do not wish to suggest that Kant is without recourse against this criticism of his epistemology. As regards the *Ding an sich*, a lengthy discussion of Kant's notion of a "negative concept" or "limiting concept" (*Grenzbegriff*) would be required to do justice to his position. And in general, an extensive retracing of Kant's whole rationale for his "Copernican Revolution" alone would suffice to illuminate his interpretation of the activity of consciousness as a "medium" or "instrument." Such a discussion is out of place here, however, for I am not seeking to adjudicate between the Kantian and Hegelian epistemologies, but only to make clear what Hegel found amiss in Kant, so as to provide a clearer perspective for developing Hegel's own positive solution to the problem of knowledge.²⁹

Virtually all of the major nineteenth-century philosophers after Kant took issue with his explanation of the *Ding an sich*, finding the idea that an unknowable realm of being is the causal basis of phenomena unsatisfactory.³⁰ An epigram attributed to Schiller sums

up this sentiment:

*Da die Metaphysik vor kurzem unbeerbt abging
Werden die Dinge an sich morgen sub hasta Verkauft.*³¹

The challenge faced by these philosophers was to develop an alternative to Kant's ingenious and monumental achievement which could return being to earth, as it were, from its exile in an unknown world, while still avoiding scepticism and subjectivism. We are now ready to turn to a positive statement of Hegel's attempt to achieve this task.

b. Hegel's Positive Solution

i. "Removing the Curtain"

Let us return to Hegel's notion of *die Reflexion*. To say that knowledge is essentially reflective is to say that the object of knowledge necessarily involves a "mediation" by categories of thought. This is Hegel's claim, and it is what he means when he says that it is not the object in its immediacy, but as "derivated" or "transmuted" or "recast" that we seek to know. Reflection is indeed the "translation" and "transformation" (*Übersetzung* and *Verwandlung*) of "any object or event . . . into its proper light" by "thinking it over" (SL §5). It is in this sense that Hegel views thought as an act of "correction" (HPh 1:418). Thought is not an epiphenomenon of an unchanging, immutable reality, but actively shapes that reality.

Now why doesn't this transmutational activity spell the distortion of the object, as Kant and the sceptics felt it did? Hegel's answer is that the Kantian and sceptical viewpoint itself represents an inversion and hence distortion of the nature of knowledge: it is not the *immediate* object, the object regarded as purely *an sich*, that is the shrine of truth, but the object as *known*, as mediated by the categories of thought. Without such mediation, the object simply has no content and thus is merely an empty category, a *caput mortuum*. It is only through the reflective process of penetrating the surface of things that the essence and truth of objects is discovered. We cannot be "content with a bare acquaintance" with what we observe, Hegel explains, "or with the fact as it appears to the senses; [we must] . . . *get behind the surface* to know what is and to comprehend it" (SL §21 Zusatz).

This "getting behind the surface" is the activity of reflection, and involves our coming to recognize the universal, or principle, or law,

which is the true and essential nature of the phenomena we observe. Hence, it is our own activity of consciousness laboring to uncover the universal in things which first gives birth to the real nature of the object. Eliot's "shadow," falling between the idea and the reality, has lost the mystery and impenetrability it held for reason in Hegel's early theological stage. The shadow is merely the world of appearance, in which reason has now found its bearings: appearance is transformed from shadowy mystery into "its proper light," through the labor of reason.

The supposed mystery of being which lies enshrouded and locked away in the object that is regarded as purely and wholly *an sich*, is in fact not a mystery at all but an empty crypt. Being in itself is an illusion in so far as it is regarded as hidden without hope of discovery behind an impenetrable curtain of mere appearance. Hegel's well-known words at the close of the "Consciousness" section of his *Phenomenology* expresses this alternative to the Kantian epistemology in a striking way.

It is manifest that behind the so-called curtain [of appearance] which is supposed to conceal the inner world [i.e., the noumenal world of being *an sich*], there is nothing to be seen unless we go behind it ourselves, as much in order that we may see, as that there may be something behind there which can be seen (PhS 103).³²

Hegel employs this metaphor of the "curtain," along with the metaphors of a "rind" or "shell," over and over again in his writings. Appearance is the curtain shrouding the essence of things, or the "rind" or "shell" covering the "core" or "kernel" of objects (see, e.g., SL §§50 *Anmerkung*, 140 *Anmerkung*; PhN §247 *Zusatz*; PhH 57; HPh 3:158, 547). But this shroud and covering is a surface-phenomenon which is penetrable by reflective thought. One of Hegel's favorite citations is Goethe's verse depicting a point-counter-point confrontation between what Hegel calls the "despairing creed of our time, that our knowledge is only subjective" (SL §22 *Zusatz*), and a new creed of scientific and philosophical idealism:

*Ins Innere der Natur
Dringt kein erschaffner Geist,
Zu glücklich wenn er nur
Die äußere Schale weiBt.*

*"Glücklich! wem sie nur
Die äuBere Schale weis't"*

*Das hör' ich sechzig Jahre wiederholen,
 Ich fluche drauf, aber verstohlen:
 Sage mir tausend tausend Male:
 Alles giebt sie reichlich und gern;
 Natur hat weder Kern
 Noch Schale,
 Alles ist sie mit einem Male.*³³

It is only when we come to realize that nature itself does not separate into a transparent "rind" and an opaque "core," but first emerges in its true light through being apprehended by our own categories of thought, that we are liberated from the illusion of an unknowable world of being. With this realization, Hegel says, we first of all "enter the native realm of truth" (PhS 104).

This "native realm of truth" is precisely the realm that Kant had called "the native home of illusion."³⁴ Which of these two characterizations we wish to accept depends on whether we are willing to posit an "impassable gulf between being and thought," as Hegel says of Kant's position (SL §60 *Zusatz*). If Hegel is right, however, such a position rests on an unwarranted restriction of our faculty of knowledge to a mere medium or instrument, and a consequent misinterpretation of the altering or recasting character of thought. This results, finally, in a "negative conception" of a spectral world of *Dinge an sich* which holds back from us the mystery of being. If we find merit in Hegel's arguments, then we cannot countenance any such ultimate incommensurability between thought and being, for it is just the grasping of the object by categories of thought which raises the object out of its immediacy and gives it a rational nature.

ii. Hegel's Epistemological Criteriology

Hegel's new way of looking at the altering activity of consciousness is what accounts for the "twist" that we saw him effecting in the traditional correspondence criterion of truth. Truth is indeed the correspondence between thought and object, but not the object conceived as the Kantian *an sich* – for such an object is definitionally outside the bounds of knowledge – but rather as the "thing *thought*." We are now in a position to flesh this conception out from a new perspective, by looking at the nature of the activity of knowing itself.

Hegel goes straight to the heart of the problem that confronts his epistemology in the Preface to his *Phenomenology*.

Now if we inquire into the truth of knowledge, it seems that we are asking what knowledge is *in itself*. Yet in this inquiry knowledge

is our object, something exists *for us*; and the *in itself* that would supposedly result from it would rather be the being of knowledge for us. What we asserted to be its essence would be not so much its truth but rather just our knowledge of it (PhS 53).

Not only is this a problem for how we are to uncover the true nature of knowledge in general, but it seems to throw a Kantian wet blanket over our hopes to direct our knowledge to "what truly is" in its own right. For, again, we want to know the world of reality, not simply our thought *about* the world.³⁵

The object, it is true, seems only to be for consciousness in the way that consciousness knows it; it seems that consciousness cannot, as it were, *get behind* the object as it exists for consciousness so as to examine what the object is in itself, and hence, too, cannot test its own knowledge by that standard [i.e., the standard of the object in itself] (PhS 54).

In this passage, Hegel levels a strong challenge against his own notion of *die Reflexion*, which, as we saw, was to get consciousness "behind the surface" of things to their essential nature.

Hegel's answer to his challenge is as follows:

The dissociation, or this semblance of dissociation [between knowledge in itself and for-consciousness], . . . is overcome by the nature of the object we are investigating [viz., knowledge]. *Consciousness provides its own criterion from within itself*, so that the investigation becomes a comparison [of consciousness] with itself; for the distinction made above falls within it.

. . . The distinction between the in itself [of the object] and the knowledge is already present [in consciousness] in the very fact that consciousness knows an object at all. Something is *for it* the *in itself*; and knowledge, or the being of the object for consciousness, it *for it* another moment (PhS 53, 54).

There is thus no "third thing," as we remarked in Chapter Two, beyond consciousness and its object, that can be brought in as a criterion for comparing consciousness and its object. For, as Kant saw, this "third thing" could only be consciousness itself. The criterion is internal to consciousness, "provided from within itself," and arises from the very fact that consciousness "simultaneously *distinguishes* itself from something [i.e., its object] and at the same time *relates* itself to it" (PhS 52). There is thus what Friedrich Grimmelinger refers to as

a "notwendige Zweideutigkeit" and "Doppeltheit" internal to consciousness which is the necessary grounding of the subject-object relation.³⁶

Hegel gives us many examples of how this "internal criteriology," as we might call it, works. In fact the whole *Phenomenology* is itself a long series of such examples, a series that traces out the "self-instruction and self-education" of consciousness which is "the very essence of mind" (PhM §387 *Anmerkung*). In Chapter Two we discussed one such example, when we saw that the concept which sense-certainty formulates of the object could not correspond to consciousness' actual experience of the object. Another good example is Hegel's discussion of Stoicism (PhS 120–22; HPh 2:236–76; cf. PhR §138 *Anmerkung & Zusatz*). Stoicism in fact represents in archetypal fashion one basic strategy of consciousness to deal with the discord it recurrently experiences between thought and being, or self and world, and hence illuminates in a fundamental way what is at stake in Hegel's project of a grand synthesis. The strategy of Stoicism, as we shall see, is a strategy of retreat and withdrawal of the self from its world (or of thought from being), and in this way we might say that the stoic response to discord is the psychological equivalent to Hegel's analysis of the Kantian epistemology. For again, Hegel sees Kant's critical philosophy as motivated by an epistemological *fear of being*, and a subsequent retreat of consciousness back into itself and the inner "world" of appearance.

The stoic, Hegel says, is utterly disillusioned with the chaos and irrationality he finds present in the world. His response is to flee into the security and integrity of his own thought, renouncing the world. The aim and object of this renunciation is freedom, and the stoic thus seeks his freedom through withdrawing from the fickleness of the world of action. But, Hegel argues, the object of the stoic's retreat – freedom – is undermined by his experience. In his flight from the world of action, the stoic flees the very condition for freedom: recognition and acknowledgement by others of one's autonomy, which can be expressed only in action. In seeking to gain freedom in thought alone, the stoic becomes "perplexed" or "embarrassed" ("*Der Stoizismus ist darum in Verlegenheit gekommen*") when he is "asked for a criterion" of his truth – "i.e. strictly speaking, for a content of [his] thought" (PhS 122; cf. HPh 2:270). For his "freedom in thought," carefully purged of the necessity of acting out this freedom in the world, is thereby purged of content, and is a "truth lacking the fullness [or "filling," or "fulfillment": *die Erfüllung*] of life" (PhS 122; cf. HPh 2:264f). In short, the stoic's object, his freedom, is unattainable by the way he goes

about seeking it. His life does not measure up to his lofty ideal and criterion of freedom, so that he is literally living an untruth, an elaborate self-deception, by his own criterion – however much he may believe in the value of his life.

This example of Hegel's internal criteriology brings out nicely the crucial role of experience [*die Erfahrung*] in consciousness' testing of its knowledge. It is through the stoic's own experience of his complete withdrawal from the world that he discovers the untruth that he lives. Knowing is linked with experience by definition for Hegel: "This dialectical movement [of distinguishing an object and relating to it in such a way that the truth or untruth of the object, as well as the relation of consciousness to it, is exposed] which consciousness exercises on itself and which affects both its knowledge and its object, is precisely what is called experience" (PhS 55).

Thus, Hegel's notion of internal criteriology always involves the test of experience. He commences his descriptions of particular forms, or "*Gestalten*," of consciousness over and over again by describing first "the notion which consciousness forms of itself," and then by asking us to "see whether this notion is confirmed by [consciousness' own] experience, and whether its reality corresponds to this experience" (PhS 242).

It is this internal criteriology – the testing of the "object as it is in itself for consciousness" by consciousness' own *Erfahrung* – which solves for Hegel the question he poses as the ultimate "riddle and problem" of knowledge: "How do we, as subjects, come into contact with objects?" Hegel exactly takes over from Aristotle his theory that

thought thinks on itself because it shares the nature of the object of thought; for it becomes an object of thought in *coming into contact* with and thinking its objects, so that thought and object of thought are the same.³⁷

Hegel writes in his "shorter" *Logic* that "the principle of experience carries with it the unspeakably important condition that, in order to accept and hold any fact as true, we must be in *contact* with it" (SL §7 *Anmerkung*). This "principle of experience," with its goal of a "contact" with objects, is on the surface the same principle and goal we saw expressed by the criterion of sense-certainty in Chapter Two.³⁸ But for Hegel, this principle differs from that of sense-certainty, first, in that the *Erfahrung* he refers to is not immediate but discursive, a temporal process of discovery; and second, in that the "contact" he proposes is not simply senuous contact, but as for Plato and Aristotle, an intellec-

tual contact, an apprehension of the object in terms of "laws, general propositions, theory – the *thoughts* of the existent" (SL §7 *Anmerkung*).

Hegel's solution to the riddle and problem of knowledge thus depends on his internalization of the criterion of knowledge to the activity of consciousness itself. This can be seen as the result of his attempt to solve the difficulties he finds with the "theoretical" and "practical" approaches to the problem of the possibility of an objective knowledge of the world. "The difficulty arising from the . . . assumption of the theoretical [approach]," Hegel summarizes, is that "natural objects confront us as permanent and impenetrable objects" (PhN §246 *Zusatz*). And the difficulty with the "practical" approach is that, in seeking to overcome this barrier posed by the "theoretical" position, it declares that the object is unknowable in itself, thereby effecting the disappearance of reality. But if we see the truth and essence of the object as inherently and inseparably connected with categories of thought – the fundamental premise of Hegel's grand synthesis – then it cannot be conceived as an external, brute datum, nor, consequently, as something which we can never know in itself, for we are in "contact" with it just to the extent that we are in contact with our own thought and experience. The object conceived as external to the contribution of thought, or as wholly transcending all possible experience of it, is like the Emperor's new clothes – wholly imaginary. The object thus conceived is equally naked (of content) and illusory, and is first made substantial, or garbed (if I may stretch the analogy this far) by categories of thought.³⁹

I wish to add a few words of caution as regards Hegel's concept of experience. There are at least three ways in which this concept is open to misunderstandings. First, it is neither so close to nor so distant from the empiricist conception as is often thought. Not so close, since as we have seen, when Hegel writes of the "test of experience," or "confirmation by" and "correspondence with" experience, *die Erfahrung* is not simply *sense*-experience, and its object is not conceived as a "given" datum. Nor, however, is Hegel's concept of experience so distant from the empiricist doctrine as is often supposed. Hegel says time and again that "nothing is known that is not in experience" (HPh 3:303); "the point of departure [of philosophy] is experience" (SL §12); "there is nothing in thought which has not been in sense and experience" (SL §8 *Anmerkung*).⁴⁰

The point of Hegel's idealism is not to contradict these statements by doing away with sense-experience, but rather to suggest that this is not enough for genuine knowledge. Sense-knowledge is prior in terms of its immediacy, but the aim of knowledge is a "*begreifendes*

Erkennen – a cognition which is conceptual, and this is prior in terms of a rational understanding of the object of experience. Hegel suggests in his *Encyclopædia* that *concepts* give us a different perspective on the same object that we apprehend by sense (SL §3), and that it is only with this "translation into the form of thought" (SL §5) or "reconstitution . . . [of the] empirical object" by notions (PhM §246 *Zusatz*), that the immediate sense-experience is transformed into a rational apprehension. But while this transformed experience "may look like a different sort of fact" and "appear in consequence to give rise to a different object," in fact it is not and does not do any such thing. The object of *begreifendes Erkennen* is the same as that of sense-knowledge, but apprehended from a higher and fuller perspective (SL §3).

This brings us to our second point of caution. *Die Erfahrung* for Hegel is not simply something that goes on inside one's head, a game of abstractions and a play of concepts. It is preeminently an action-in-the-world, an *expression* of thought – intentions, ideals, theories – in a *concrete* way. Writers like Kierkegaard, Feuerbach, and Marx have characterized Hegel's philosophy as attempting to "produce experience out of itself," as Feuerbach puts it,⁴¹ meaning that his epistemology involves an illicit and incomprehensible leap from categories of thought to categories of being.⁴² But Hegel's philosophy is closer to the very opposite of this caricature, and is rather of a spirit with Merleau-Ponty's dictum that "philosophy is merely an elucidated experience."⁴³ The fact that categories of thought are also categories of being for Hegel⁴⁴ – unlike for Kant, who declared that categories of thought have no purchase on the being of things in themselves – is effected precisely through the experience of human consciousness. Experience is the "education and development required to bring out into consciousness what is contained [only implicitly] in thought" (SL §67).

Marx is thus wrong to include Hegel in his (in)famous charge that "the philosophers have only *interpreted* the world in various ways; the point is to *change* it."⁴⁵ For Hegel no less than for Marx, consciousness is a "revolutionary force," as Marx terms it.⁴⁶ "Consciousness," Hegel says, can never simply "find itself immediately, but *produces* itself by its own action" (PhS 209). And this self-production is at once a transformation and modification of the world for Hegel: human action "affects not merely . . . the content of consciousness, . . . but affects reality as such" (PhS 245).

Finally, a third word of caution. It is sometimes tempting to regard Hegel's talk of the "translation" of immediate experience into notions, as well as the "translation" of categories of thought into categories of being, as all-too-easy transitions in his epistemology and logic. But

knowledge is not an easy thing to come by for Hegel. He regards the road to knowledge as being a "pathway of doubt" and a "road of despair" which constantly foils our impatience to arrive at certainty. For "impatience demands the impossible," Hegel writes, "to wit, the attainment of the end – knowledge – without the means" (PhS 17); "In order to [arrive at] genuine knowledge, [consciousness] must travel a long way and work its passage" (PhS 15). The means to knowledge that Hegel speaks of involves "the suffering, the patience, and the labor of the negative" (PhS 10) – that is, the "utter dismemberment" (PhS 19) of the truisms of the natural consciousness.⁴⁷ For the attainment of knowledge involves a severe disruption of beliefs and of natural, unreflective "certainties" and convictions.

It is in this sense that Hegel compares the process of the development of knowledge to the biblical story of the Fall (e.g., SL §24 *Zusatz*; HPh 1: 105; 3:8–10; PhS 467–68; PhM §405 *Zusatz*). Our natural, immediate, instinctive, commonsense beliefs are our "original innocence," from which we are alienated and estranged by the impulse to satisfy our curiosity and doubts. This satisfaction can only be won, however, by the "labor and culture of the spirit" which involves the "curse" of man, "that he must work in the sweat of his brow . . . [and] bring forth in sorrow" (SL §24 *Zusatz*).⁴⁸ Work, or labor (*die Arbeit*), is for Hegel the necessary means to knowledge; it is both a "curse," in that it involves the "fall" from our natural beliefs and convictions, and the means to "redemption," for it alone can heal our doubts by "producing and transforming" both man and the world into a spiritual, rational existence (SL §24 *Zusatz*).

The upshot of Hegel's epistemology is that "the real nature of the object is brought to light in reflection; but it is not less true that his exertion of thought is *my* act. If this is so, the real nature [of the object] is a product of my mind, in its character of thinking subject" (SL §23). This passage expresses the kernel of Hegel's idealism, with its conviction of a "knowledge of the world as a world actually projected out of myself" (PhM §402 *Zusatz*), or briefly, that "the object is my idea" (PhM §424). The Kantian curtain of appearance is withdrawn, and the essence of objects shines forth, for this essence is none other than consciousness' own work and production: the real nature of objects is the "manifestation of mind" (PhS 486).

Here in essence we have the Hegelian grand synthesis of thought and being. But we shall see in the next and final section of the chapter that these idealist dicta are misleading, insofar as they do not indicate what makes Hegel's idealism so interesting, the fact that it meant to "overlap" the realist metaphysics. Still, Hegel is convinced that unless

we finally accept the idealist insight that the truth of objects is the object as thought (the "thing thought"), our view of knowledge and of being is unsatisfactory, and we could never overcome scepticism or solve the "riddle and problem" of knowledge.

3. Hegel's Idealism

Schelling, at the age of twenty, writes that "*das Hauptgeschäft aller Philosophie besteht in Lösung des Problems vom Daseyn der Welt*."⁴⁹ These are not the misguided ramblings of a radical youth, but the expression of the task of a whole philosophical age. The course of post-Lockean philosophy was a Hegelian "pathway of doubt" and "road of despair" about the existence of the external world. Berkeley's idealism effected – for Hume, Kant, and Hegel, as well as many others – the "disappearance of all external reality" (HPh 3:364). Hume built a strong case for the triumph of scepticism over all attempts to demonstrate conclusively the existence of external objects. And Kant's attempt to meet the Humean challenge resurrected knowledge of *appearances* by effecting, as Schopenhauer calls it, "the vitiation of all objectivity."⁵⁰ For the post-Kantian idealists, the task of philosophy became a reconstruction or "deduction" of the lost world, but in a way that might avoid the empiricist metaphysics which had initiated the course of doubt about the external world.

Hegel takes up this task by defining "the aim of knowledge" to be "the divestment of the objective world that stands opposed to us of its strangeness, and, as the phrase goes, to find ourselves at home in it: which means no more than to trace the objective world back to the notion [i.e., to thought] – to our innermost self" (SL §194 *Zusatz*). A good way of elaborating this idealist position is by seeing how Hegel compares the activities of consciousness and of self-consciousness.⁵¹ *Consciousness* is for Hegel the relation of the knowing subject to an external object, a relation where the subject is passive and the object is a mere "thing" or "indifferent being" (PhS 480). *Self-consciousness* is the relation of the knowing subject to *him- (or her)-self* through his (her) relation to the object: "the existence of the world becomes for self-consciousness its [self-consciousness'] own truth and presence; it is certain of experiencing only itself therein" (PhS 140). Or briefly, "self-consciousness is aware that it is in itself the objectively real world" (PhS 211). We may say, then, that for Hegel the transition from the standpoint of consciousness to that of self-consciousness involves the transition from realism to idealism. Showing the path of this tran-

sition is the task Hegel sets for himself in his *Phenomenology*.⁵²

There are several ways of regarding the relative merits of realism. Fichte, for example, felt that "neither the idealist nor the realist system can directly refute its opposite, for their quarrel is about the first principle; . . . each of the two, if only its first principle is granted, refutes the other."⁵³ Other thinkers agree that idealism and realism are founded on basic, unprovable assumptions about the nature of knowledge, but feel that these assumptions can be reconciled.⁵⁴ A more common attitude is that one of the two systems is clearly superior, the other being even absurd or "repugnant" to common sense. Schopenhauer, for example, says that "true philosophy must at all costs be idealistic; indeed it must be so merely to be honest."⁵⁵ On the other side, thinkers in the realist camp have shown an equally vituperative attitude. Reichenbach, for example, speaks of the idealist as suffering from a kind of "emotional maladjustment," and goes on to say that "the symbol of the idealist is the man who resorts to daydreaming because he is unable to enjoy reality. . . . Idealism is philosophical escapism, . . . [a] narcotic wish-fulfillment of dreams."⁵⁶

In general I think that both the idealist and the realist tend to be most eloquent and perceptive in their disclosures of shortcomings of the opposing view, and less open-minded in their considerations of the difficulties present in their own positions. For the idealist, the problem which has come to be termed the "ego-centric predicament"⁵⁷ must be faced. If, as Hegel says, "the object is my idea," how do we ever get outside the Leibnizian prison of the self – the self which has no "windows" to the outside world, as Leibniz puts it – to the external world? And the realist, who rejects the view that "the object is my idea," must still come to grips with an exactly parallel problem, what we may call "the problem of representation": he must show that the interpretive act of consciousness in its representation of objects is eliminable (i.e., not constitutive), so that we can get at the "givenness" of reality in itself.

It is to Hegel's credit that he took each of these problems seriously, and sought an epistemological solution which would not sweep either of them under the rug. For Hegel, the "critical idealism" of Kant and the "subjective idealism" of Fichte each are undermined by the ego-centric predicament peering out from under the rug.

a. Kant's "Critical Idealism" and Fichte's "Subjective Idealism"

Kant felt that all "genuine idealism" (*wirklicher Idealismus*) – his own "transcendentaler" or "kritischer Idealismus" is not "genuine idealism" in his view, since it asserts the "empirical reality" of phenomena

– is open to the charge that Hegel levels against Berkeley, namely, that it destroys the reality of the external world.⁵⁸ Kant's "critical idealism," on the other hand, asserts "just the opposite of [genuine] idealism," in that it claims "that things as objects of our senses existing outside us are given, but we know nothing of what they may be in themselves, knowing only their appearances, that is, the representations which they cause in us by affecting our senses" (*die Vorstellungen, die sie in uns wirken, indem sie unsere Sinne affizieren*).⁵⁹

There are, in Hegel's view, grievous problems with this position. Like Saint Paul, who wrote that "the world was created by the word of God, so that what is seen was made out of things which do not appear" (Hebrews 11:3), Kant offers in the just-cited passage a causal explanation of appearances, namely that our representations of phenomena are caused by noumena, things which do not appear in themselves. Hence, Kant asserts that "phenomena presuppose a supersensible ground . . . which we must introduce as the basis of nature as phenomenon."⁶⁰

In a way, this causal explanation is an attempt to solve the "problem of representation" mentioned above. For while our forms of intuition and categories of thought are constitutive of phenomena, they are eliminable from (do not constitute) the object which causes our representations: the thing in itself is beyond the scope of our consciousness.⁶¹ In Hegel's view, however, Kant's causal explanation is unsuccessful, resting on unwarranted presuppositions.⁶² In the first place, any such causal explanation transgresses Kant's insistence that the principle of causality is a purely subjective condition of experience and cannot be applied to anything which does not appear.⁶³ And second, the idea that there must be an "unknown ground" of our representations – i.e., that our "inner experience" is possible only on the assumption of outer objects existing in themselves⁶⁴ – is inconsistent with Kant's seemingly opposite claim in his *Aesthetic* that it is our *inner* forms of intuition and "modes of representing objects" that are the *condition for outer appearance* (i.e., for phenomena).⁶⁵ In fact, Kant says that "if I take away the thinking subject, the whole corporeal world must at once vanish, for it is *nothing* save an appearance in the sensibility of the subject and a mode of its representations."⁶⁶ How then can the thing in itself be the condition for phenomena?

This last statement is not eliminable from Kant's philosophy, without at once eliminating the crux of his Copernican Revolution, which was to save us from scepticism. Schopenhauer points this out at even greater length than Hegel, seeking to show that Kant "furtively maneuvers round" this unavoidable identification of the object of

knowledge and its representation, so as to "stealthily evade" its consequence, that it leaves no room for a "causal nexus . . . [or inference to] the *Ding an sich*."⁶⁷ Schopenhauer's conclusion is that Kant's philosophy establishes beyond dispute that "the distinction between the representation and the object of the representation is unfounded" – notwithstanding Kant's own tendency to attempt to evade this conclusion.

But, if Hegel and Schopenhauer are correct in this line of argument, this lands Kant squarely in the midst of the ego-centric predicament (just as it landed Schopenhauer and Fichte). If, as Schopenhauer says, "the world is my representation,"⁶⁸ then external reality simply disappears, being superfluous. And if we see Kant's argument for the *Ding an sich* – the noumenal realm which is the causal ground of appearance – as illicit, then he can no longer legitimately distinguish his own idealism from that of the "genuine idealism" that he wishes to spurn and avoid at all costs.

Hegel associates what has become known as the "ego-centric predicament" with subjective idealism. In discussing Plato's philosophy, Hegel writes that

the idealism of Plato must not be thought of as being *subjective idealism* – that *false idealism* which has made its appearance in modern times and which maintains that we . . . are not influenced from without, but that all conceptions are derived from out of the subject. . . . It is a quite false conception . . . that [true] idealism means that the individual produces from himself all his ideas, even the most immediate (HPh 2:43).

The point of Hegel's dispute with subjective idealism (mainly Fichte) is that it locates what we have termed the "agency of truth" exclusively within the individual subject. "Fichte," according to Hegel, "says that what is not for consciousness does not concern consciousness," where the consciousness in question is the individual ego (HPh 3:483f). Hence, "what is altogether lacking is any consideration of the object as what it is in itself; it is plainly considered [by Fichte] only in relation" to the subject (HPh 3:503). Such charges could be taken directly from the platform of the "New Realists" in their criticism of the ego-centric predicament.

Such talk on the part of Hegel constrains us to pause before jumping to the conclusion that his idealism short-shrifts the empirical object, or simply makes it into a subjective idea. And yet we have seen Hegel clearly state that "the object is my idea" and that "all being is

being for consciousness." How are we to reconcile his criticism of subjective idealism with such claims? Or are we to charge him with duplicity?

b. The "Overlapping" of Realism and Idealism

We have mentioned that Hegel regards the attainment of knowledge to rest on the transition from the standpoint of consciousness to that of self-consciousness, or the coming-to-discover that the relation of consciousness to an external object is finally a relation of consciousness to itself. But this discovery does not entail for Hegel the superfluity of the activity of consciousness, that is, of the relation of the self to an external object. No, "the merit and rights" of consciousness "must unhesitatingly be admitted" (SL §80 *Zusatz*), for the process of distinguishing the self from an independent object is the crucial first step in the activity of knowledge (see, e.g., PhS 23, 52). Hence "spirit lives in the difference of its consciousness and its self-consciousness" (PhS 417), which is to say that it requires both. The aim of knowledge, to "behold the self in the object" (PhS 417), requires first of all an external world and an independent object.

Such a view involves an important concession to realism. Kojève in fact goes so far as to claim that "Hegelian absolute idealism has nothing to do with what is ordinarily called 'idealism.' And if terms are used in their usual senses, it must be said that Hegel's system is 'realist.'"⁶⁹ The central passage Kojève cites in support of this surprising claim comes from the closing pages of the *Phenomenology*, where Hegel writes that the "externalization" (*die Entäußerung*) of consciousness into the world "is still incomplete [insofar as] it expresses the relation of [consciousness] self certainty to the object, which object, just because it is found in this relation [to the subject], has not yet won its complete freedom" (PhS 492).

Other passages which might seem to support Kojève's characterization of Hegel's epistemology as a "realist metaphysics"⁷⁰ abound in Hegel's writings. In the Preface to the *Phenomenology* Hegel defines "scientific cognition" as "demanding the surrender to the life of the object" (PhS 32). And later in the *Phenomenology* Hegel disparages the encroachment on idealism of what he calls the "principle of utility," the principle, namely, that "the thing in itself is nothing, but has meaning only in the relation to the I" (PhS 481; and cf. 305). Similarly, Hegel criticizes Kant – fairly or (as it seems to me) unfairly⁷¹ – for "holding that both the form and the matter of knowledge are supplied by the Ego" (SL §42 *Zusatz*), and hence for ignoring the "'given' in sensa-

tion" by "reducing objectivity directly to . . . and ideal factor" (F&K 154).

But Kojève does not cite the whole passage from which he extracts his quote. Hegel goes on to say that when we fully regard the object as having "won its complete freedom," this only serves to "reinstate the subject" (PhS 492). He means by this that in knowing the object in its completeness, we find that it is the expression of spirit or mind. Kojève thus cuts Hegel's epistemology off at its halfway point, the point where consciousness has moved beyond its original self-absorption to its "surrender to the life of the object," but without following the process to its fulfillment – the crucial element of *return* (*zurückgehen, zurückkommen, rückkehren*) into self-consciousness from this surrender and externalization.⁷² Hegel's epistemology is self-confessedly a *circular development and becoming*, a "*Kreis der Entwicklung*" and "*wiederherstellende Werden*,"⁷³ involving the process of externalization and return, of relation to an independent and external object and of the appropriation of this object by self-consciousness by which self-consciousness is "reborn" (PhS 492). This "rebirth" of spirit absolutely requires the realist aspect of Hegel's epistemology, the surrender to the object, but without the reappropriation of the object of our experience, the world would be ultimately alien and alienating. This reappropriation is the discovery by consciousness that "the object is its own production" (PhS 492), its idea, but its idea given full expression in the external world.

It is thus no sign of duplicity on Hegel's part when he says such things as the following:

The influence from without . . . comes therefore first in cognition. . . . A system of idealism cannot be based on the theory that nothing comes to us from without. . . . But there follows the activity of making this passive, [external] content one's own (HPh 2:187).

Cognition [has two sides to it]. On the one hand it [must] supersede the one-sidedness of subjectivity by receiving the existing world into itself . . . and filling its abstract self-certainty with this objective content. On the other hand, it [must] supersede the one-sidedness of the objective world, . . . modifying and informing it by [thought] (SL §225).

The determinations of the object of which mind is aware are, of course, inherent in the object, but at the same time they are mediated and posited by thought (PhM §441 *Zusatz*).

Kojève's analysis of Hegel's epistemology is misleading because it expresses only half of the picture, but he is right to warn us that we are easily "deceived by the Hegelian expression '*absoluter Idealismus*.'"⁷⁴ We must take Hegel at his word when he says that his own philosophy is an attempt to make "*the two methods of realism and idealism overlap one another*" (HPh 3:164). We may sum this point up by remarking once again that Hegel's epistemology is teleological. The *end* or *goal* of knowledge is to "supersede the cardinal distinction between consciousness and self-consciousness, and to give the form of self-consciousness to the object of consciousness" (PhS 417). Thus the truth of the object of knowledge is that it is a "product of thought" (PhS 417), but this is speaking from the standpoint of the end, or accomplished *telos* of the whole process of the activity of knowing. And this process demands an initially external object.

It is in this sense that Hegel says, "the object is the *notion implicitly*, and thus when the notion, in the shape of End, is realized," the object is known as the manifestation of thought (SL §212 *Zusatz*). But *explicitly* the object is an independent thing, which we must experience as such, and only as the result of this experience can we reformulate the essence of the object in terms of its constitution by categories and principles of thought. "The aim of all genuine science," Hegel says, "is just this, that mind shall recognize itself in everything in heaven and earth" (PhM §377 *Zusatz*), but the fruition of this aim is possible only with the "influence from without" and the "surrender to the life of the object": "the depth [of mind] is to be measured by the greatness of the craving with which spirit seeks to find itself in what lies outside of itself" (HPh 3:546). Hegel's grand synthesis of thought and being is a synthesis which occurs only as a *process*, a pathway of thought first of all finding itself confronted by an apparently alien world (the initial crisis of discord), and only through a path of confronting and immersing itself in that world – "surrendering itself" to its environment (the denouement of this discord) – at last transforming the alien character of being through a discovery that the world is nothing but the external shape of mind (the resolution of discord).

Chapter Four

BECOMING AND DIALECTIC

All things take place by strife.

Heraclitus

In Chapter Two we saw that Hegel conceives of truth in terms of process and movement: truth is "made operative" through a temporal and historical manifestation. And in Chapter Three we learned that Hegel views the being of the object to be the "thing *thought*," so that thought and being are a unity. Further, since thought is itself a progressive *Bildung*, and thought and being are a unity, then so too is being an evolving development of its potentialities to fruition: *being is a becoming*. Becoming is in this way the middle term between knowing and being, the connective principle which unites epistemology and ontology in Hegel's grand synthesis. It is only because being and knowing share in a process of becoming, a synchronous development from potency to actualization, that there is no ultimate incongruence and discordancy between them.

In the present chapter, we will sketch out the dynamics of the Hegelian conception of becoming more fully, beginning with an analysis of his theory of substance, which thus far we have neglected in deference to his anatomy of the "subject," but which is an equally key foundation for his ontology of becoming. We will then turn to investigate the intriguing distinction Hegel makes between "mere logical" becoming and existential becoming, which is crucial for understanding the much-disputed transition from Being to Becoming in his *Logic*. These two doctrines, the ontology of substance and the establishment of a logical/existential axis of becoming, will prepare

the way for an examination of Hegel's principle of negativity and his theory of dialectic, which together are the motivating forces of becoming in his philosophy.

1. Hegel's Notion of Substance

Let us begin by returning to a passage already referred to in Chapter Two from the Preface to Hegel's *Phenomenology*, where he writes that "everything turns on grasping and expressing the true not only as *substance*, but equally as *subject*" (PhS 10). We have already discussed in detail the question of who, or what, this subject is in Hegel's philosophy, but we have yet to gain a clear idea of the character of substance. In general, we may say that subjectivity is what accounts for the fact that substance is not an inert being, a simple, undifferentiated "is-ness," but on the contrary a being which has within it an impulse to development, to expression, to becoming.

The above quotation from the Preface to the *Phenomenology* is followed by a description of this dynamic nature of substance.

The living substance is being which is in truth subject, or what is the same, is in truth actual in so far as it is the movement of positing itself, . . . the process of its own becoming, the circle that presupposes its end as its goal, having its end also as its beginning; and only by being worked out to its end, is actual [*nur durch die Ausführung und sein Ende wirklich ist*] (PhS 10).

[Substance is] the essence consummating itself through its development; . . . it is essentially a *result* – only in the end is it what truly is. Precisely in this consists its nature, viz., to be actual, subject, the spontaneous becoming of itself (PhS 11).¹

Hegel's view of the *teleological* character of becoming is clear in these passages, and this points to a revealing affinity with the Aristotelian doctrine of substance. Aristotle is one of three philosophers whose theories of substance it will be fruitful to compare with Hegel's in this section – the others being Leibniz and Heraclitus. By seeing how Hegel's own theory is strongly influenced by these three philosophers, as well as indicating points of divergence, we will gain a much clearer perspective on his principle of becoming.

a. The Influence of Aristotle

Two main differences between Hegel's and Aristotle's doctrines of substance are that Hegel does not distinguish between three types of substance, as Aristotle does, and that for Hegel *all* substance involves motion, which is not true for Aristotle.² But Hegel was very much impressed with Aristotle's hyle-morphic conception of substance, and he tends to gloss over these differences. There are three related aspects of Aristotle's theory which I find especially important for Hegel.

First, Aristotle claimed that form (*eidōs*, *morphē*) inheres in or is "immersed" in matter (*hylē*),³ and that this is what accounts for motion in substance. For Hegel, "form" becomes "subject," and the Aristotelian "matter" – which he generally associates with the "substratum" of substance⁴ – becomes a somewhat vaguer notion for Hegel (although certainly not an "I know not what"). It remains the aspect of substance *qua* substratum which persists or remains "self-identical" through change, and although there is no univocal term which Hegel uses to refer to it, in general I think we can say that the Aristotelian "matter" becomes being *an sich* for Hegel.⁵ The important point here, however, is that the relation of *inherence* is adopted completely by Hegel, as well as the notion that this is what accounts for the movement of substance. It is only because "substance is in truth subject" that its essence is a "movement and unfolded becoming" (PhS 12).

Second, Aristotle's hyle-morphism is what accounts for the fact that substance *both changes and persists*. For his doctrine of the inherence of form in matter directly involves the distinction between actuality and potentiality.

The matter which changes [from one state to another] must be capable of both [of these different] states. And since *that which 'is' has two senses*, we must say that everything changes from that which is potentially to that which is actually.⁶

Substance both changes (develops) and persists (remains self-identical) through this change, in that it is from the start the potentiality of what it becomes actually, so that it *is* throughout the change, although in a different sense than it is at the end.

This is crucial for Hegel as well, who says of substance that it is that which remains "self-identical," or in a state of "simple repose" (PhS 27) and "peace with itself" (PhS 12) throughout its process of

"becoming-other." "In itself," Hegel says, substance is and remains in a state of "untroubled equality and unity with itself" (PhS 10). And yet as such it is mere potentiality, the unshaped and undeveloped, "lacking the self-movement of the form" (PhS 10). Without this movement, substance remains embryonic, unfulfilled by the articulation and manifestation of its content. Form, or subjectivity, thus provides for substance both "a bond and principle of unity, and also an internal source of development" (SL §14).

This leads us to the third respect in which Hegel's philosophy of substance relies on Aristotle's, the respect in which their distinction between potency and act accounts for their visions of becoming as *immanent teleology*. For Aristotle, form is associated with the *telos* of substance, that toward which it aims and by which it is guided in its process of development. As such, the end and actuality of substance is present from the start, so that a substance is initially or potentially already defined by what it is to become. Form or *telos* is the inherent principle (*archê*) of becoming in things,⁷ the "reason" or *Logos* of things,⁸ "that for the sake of which" the "process of evolution" of substance occurs, and that which determines the pattern of this evolution or development.⁹

All this is true for Hegel as well. We have noted his claim that substance is a kind of circular becoming which "presupposes its end as its goal and has its end also as its beginning, and only by being worked out to its end is actual." Hence, Hegel writes that the actuality of substance is initially "hidden, and shows itself only in the end, but in such a way that this end reveals that [it] has also been there from the beginning" (PhS 157). Substance, the being of things, is thus a process of internal striving to fulfill its potency, and this process is the *power or force* of spirit (*Geist*). Spirit – which in one important sense we can see as Hegel's name for substance animated by subject¹⁰ – "begins with a germ of infinite possibility, but only possibility, containing its substantial existence in an undeveloped form, as the object and goal which it reaches only in its resultant, full reality. [This possibility is the potentiality of spirit] which involves its actuality as a germ or impulse: . . . the Aristotelian *dynamis* is also *potentia*, power and might" (PhH 57). All substance is initially embryonic, merely in principle what its full nature entails, and its life or spirit consists in a path of self-construction and self-transcendence – this is the "power and might" of spirit – towards its fully actual shape.

Aristotle often expresses the teleological relation of matter to form by saying that "matter *desires* form,"¹¹ as the undeveloped and unformed desiring shape. A substance "desires" or "reaches out

towards" a specific form, and this form is inherent in the substance as its "germ" or "pattern" – its "creative seed endowed with specific formative properties." Desire (*die Begierde*) is also an important concept in Hegel's philosophy, although he generally confines its activity to the being of self-consciousness, as he does with the term "striving" (*das Streben*), while reserving such terms as "impulse" (*der Trieb, die Triebkraft*) or "impelling and guiding principle" (*die Fortleitung*), or simply "energy" (*die Energie*) or "power" (*die Macht*) or "force" (*die Kraft*) for the relation of substance to its form or subjectivity.

Desire is for Hegel the universal experience of self-consciousness of the yearning for self-completion. He sometimes even suggests that God is not free from desire, since His creation of the world indicates a desire for self-expression (v. HPh 2:75; PhN §247 *Zusatz*). It is in this sense of reaching-out for self-completion that Aristotle says that "matter desires form" and Hegel says that substance has an internal impulse to develop. The Hegelian theory of substance thus consciously hearkens back to Aristotle in its principles that (1) substance is a form of *motion*, a process, rather than a static being-in-itself; (2) that, at the same time, it *persists* through this process; and (3) that because of this persistence through alteration, substance is not mere change but *teleological development or evolution*, which is itself analyzed in terms of the principle of power, impulse, desire.¹²

b. The Influence of Leibniz

This is a good point at which to indicate another important source of influence on Hegel's theory of substance – the philosophy of Leibniz. Leibniz defined substance in terms of an internal "primitive force of activity,"¹³ "continuous change,"¹⁴ a "persistent continuous transition,"¹⁵ "continual strife," and "inquietude and unrest."¹⁶ This is exactly Hegel's view when he writes that substance *qua* spirit is "never at rest, but always engaged in moving forward" (PhS 6), a perpetual "movement and unfolded becoming," or that "Spirit is not an inert being but, on the contrary, absolutely restless being, pure activity, . . . [being] which is truly actual only through the specific forms of its self-manifestation" (PhM §378 *Zusatz*). It is precisely this restless inquietude of being which accounts for the unavoidable discord of life, for moments of stability are only fleeting, and inevitably yield themselves up to transition, to uprootedness, to what Hegel analyzes as the "violence" of change.

Reminiscent of Aristotle, the internal principle of this unresting activity is for Leibniz *force* (sometimes referred to as "*conatus*"¹⁷),

which he regards as constitutive of substance.¹⁸ Force is the spontaneous internal activity of substance that preserves its identity through change, being the principle of transition between states in the individual thing.¹⁹ Force also plays the role that form does for Aristotle, and that subjectivity does for Hegel, in its being the moving principle behind the development of potency to actuality,²⁰ and that which accounts for substances being "entelechies" – i.e., teleologically guided.²¹ Finally, force is described in terms of "appetition,"²² or "striving" and "desire"²³ – just as we saw desire to be fundamental in both Aristotle's and Hegel's anatomies of substance – which are the fundamental internal characteristics of all created substances and which serve to "express" or "project"²⁴ the potentialities of substance as specific, determinate actualities.

Hegel highly commends this part of Leibniz's philosophy (v. HPh 3:325, 331–34). Indeed all that we have just cited from Leibniz is appropriated by Hegel in his own theory of substance. We have seen this to be so in Hegel's definition of substance in terms of the "perpetual restless activity" of subjectivity, and in terms of the teleological flavor of the becoming of potentiality into actuality. Further, Hegel defines subjectivity – what is for Leibniz force (or conatus or appetite or desire) – explicitly in terms of "expression" and "manifestation," as does Leibniz. Thus, according to Hegel "the power [*die Kraft*] of *Geist* is only as great as its expression [*Außerung*]" (PhS 6); "*Geist* is essentially energy, active essence, the manifestation and self-determination [which is] the element of the concrete nature [of substance]" (RH 51). This is perhaps the most central and general principle of Hegel's ontology, that *being is in truth becoming*, for "simple being . . . or abstract essence . . . lacks authentic subsistence," but also has within itself the seed of its self-determination: "it manifests itself" (PhS 471) and hence "transforms its [abstract being] in itself into that which is for itself, . . . consummating and completing itself" (PhS 488). All being is self-transcendence, the process of continual reconstruction.

We should note a crucial difference between Hegel and Leibniz within this shared ground. Leibniz's whole doctrine of the "expression" of potentialities of substance by force is qualified by the claim that this expression is confined to the interiority of the individual substance. That is, strictly speaking, there is no interaction between substances for Leibniz, the activity of self-expression being enclosed within the ontological confines of the individual.²⁵ Each simple substance, or "monad," is a "world apart," as Leibniz puts it.²⁶ This is why Leibniz feels that there are no "extrinsic denominations" of substance,²⁷ mean-

ing that the activity of any one substance cannot causally influence the state of any other.

For Hegel, however, expression and manifestation are an *Entäußerung*, an externalization or outward movement, which necessarily involves causal relation to an "other." The being of a substance is always defined by Hegel in part as a "being-for-others," a relation to other beings.

Essential correlation [*absolute Verhältnisse*] is the specific and completely universal way in which things appear. Everything that exists stands in correlation, and this correlation is the true nature of every existence (SL §135 *Zusatz*).

Once mention some substance, and you thereby create a connection [*ein Zusammenhang*] with other existences (SL §88 *Anmerkung*).

As Hegel says in his early essay on "Love" (1798), "nothing carries the root of its own being completely in itself" (Lv 304). Hegel's point is not that everything is determined by an external fate, but only that existence is inconceivable as a self-enclosed "world apart." Being is never self-sufficient, but absolutely requires *recognition* [*Anerkennung*] from what is other, and this recognition alters being, exposing its "being-for-self" as always as well a "being-for-others," a being-towards-the-world, an existence in an environment which beckons it and effects it.²⁸

c. The Influence of Heraclitus

A third, and no doubt best-known, influence on Hegel's theory of substance is Heraclitus. Hegel leaves his reader in no doubt of his debt to Heraclitus. "With Heraclitus," Hegel writes in his *History of Philosophy*, "we see land; there is no proposition of Heraclitus which I have not adopted in my Logic" (HPh 2:279). Hegel is equally explicit in identifying the central insight of Heraclitus which is to be appropriated by his own speculative philosophy: "The advance made by Heraclitus [over the Eleatics] is the progression from *being* as the first immediate thought, to the category of *becoming*, . . . which is the first concrete, absolute [thought]" (HPh 2:279; cf. SL §88 *Zusatz*; LL 83).

Heraclitus asserted that "being" and "non-being" are equally abstract concepts, and that "being no more is than non-being" (SL §88 *Zusatz*). What is true is *becoming*, where being and non-being are united in their opposition. This, as we shall see shortly, is precisely the view that Hegel adopts towards the abstract categories of being and

nothing (see section 2 below). Definite characteristics are ephemeral in the perpetual becoming of a thing – they *are* and immediately *are not* as the thing changes. Heraclitus proposes the element of *fire* as the expression of this process of becoming,²⁹ and Hegel himself compares subjectivity to fire in his famous Phoenix metaphor, where “spirit is eternally preparing for itself its funeral pyre and consuming itself upon it, but so that from its ashes is produced a new, revitalized, fresh life” (PhH 73). For both Hegel and Heraclitus, fire symbolizes the perpetual change and mutation of things, where they cease to be what they were and transform themselves into a new character. Continuous self-transcendence is thus the central character of existence which Hegel takes over from Heraclitus.

As striking as the similarities between Hegel and Heraclitus are, there is also an important point of divergence, a point which, as we shall see in a moment, will later return to haunt Hegel when he seeks to make good the lack he finds in Heraclitus. Hegel writes that “there is only one thing wanting in Heraclitus’s notion of process; . . . the *permanence and rest* which Aristotle gives may be missed” (HPh 2:292). Hegel does of course recognize that Heraclitus posits a unity which permeates the perpetual flux and strife of opposites,³⁰ but feels that this unity is never “reflected back into substance” (HPh 2:2921). That is, it is a “unity which *only exists in opposition*” – in the ever onrushing flux of becoming – without allowing for the permanence and rest of substance (HPh 2:2921).

Hegel’s point here is an extremely important one in his philosophy, but easy to misunderstand. It is precisely here, where Hegel both seeks to take over from Heraclitus his metaphysics of becoming *and* reject his idea that becoming never finds “repose,” that the internal tension in Hegel’s philosophy which I mentioned in the Introduction arises, the tension which emerges as a result of his double commitment to a metaphysics of becoming, on the one hand, and on the other, to a final consummation of becoming in the “repose of being.” We must defer analysis of this tension until our last two chapters, but we can point out here the general lines of Hegel’s attempted resolution.

Hegel’s approval of Aristotle’s notion of substance has to do with the fact that Aristotle accounts for the element of the self-identity or permanence of substance through change. But then if Hegel is not to be charged with inconsistency, his opposition to Heraclitus cannot be on the grounds that the unity which Heraclitus posits as “existing only in opposition” is simply mistaken. For Aristotle’s principle of the self-identity of substance is also a conception of self-identity in opposition,

in "the change from given states into those contrary to them," as Aristotle puts it.³¹ Hegel's point must be that the Heraclitian unity is not sufficient: it is only one aspect of permanence or rest which must be accounted for. The other aspect has to do with the *resolution* or *completion* of the process of becoming – the accomplished *telos*. This aspect is the ultimate "return," as Hegel puts it, of subject into substance, or becoming into being – becoming that has *become*. This is accounted for by Aristotle, since the completion of process is essential to his teleology, and it is this which Hegel finds missing in Heraclitus.

Hegel himself asserts his independence from the subjective idealism of Fichte largely on these grounds. He acknowledges that Fichte's notion of becoming is not one of sheer flux without any principle of unity – any more than Heraclitus's is. For Fichte posits the unity of the ego as a synthetic "connective tissue" of things and events.³² But, Hegel argues, there is no provision for the *completion* of the process of becoming in Fichte, for the consummation of the development of things and our knowledge of things. Fichte himself admits that subjectivity points to an "infinite progression" without completion, a "perpetual striving" without ever reaching any final purpose or *telos* – and claims that we can never break out of this infinite progression.³³

It is Hegel's self-professed task to show that spirit "transcends . . . [and gains] a liberation . . . from this endless striving, . . . [and] wrests itself out of this progress to infinity" (PhM §386 *Zusatz*). In Chapters Six and Seven we will have to discuss in some detail how successfully Hegel accounts for this element of completion, the "radical and real achievement" of the end of the process of becoming of substance (SL §235). I will argue there that Hegel's strong reliance on a Heraclitian metaphysics of becoming will render his vision of an ultimate resolution of process quite problematic. Nor do I believe that we can have recourse to an Aristotelian synthesis of becoming and completion to resolve Hegel's dilemma. For, although Hegel finds in Aristotle a sense of completion and repose which he feels is lacking in Heraclitus, Aristotle never even imagined applying his principle of completion to *history*, which is precisely where the dilemma becomes most problematic for Hegel. But we are getting ahead of ourselves here. For the moment it is sufficient to be clear about what Hegel's goal is, as it emerges out of his reflections on Heraclitus, reserving for our last two chapters a critical analysis of the cogency of this goal. Hegel's goal is to view substance as a process of becoming which arrives at its *telos*, which arrival signals the "permanence and rest" or "repose" of substance in a sense he believes to be unaccounted for by Heraclitus

(and Fichte) – the sense, namely, in which substance implies self-completion, becoming as become.³⁴

2. The Nature of Becoming

We have seen in section 1 that the central principle of Hegel's theory of substance is that the truth of being is a process of becoming. We have yet to give an explanation of the sense that "completion" has in Hegel's philosophy; but, while this explanation must await a later chapter, we can say now that we should not understand Hegel's principle of completion in such a way that it abrogates his principle of becoming – the principle that the truth of being is becoming. The principle of completion must be a true Hegelian "*Aufhebung*" of becoming, a resolution of becoming which does not simply negate it or leave it behind. For becoming is not simply a phase or intermittent characteristic of substance or being, but its very definition, its reality and *Logos*. This insistence on preserving the Heraclitian metaphysics of becoming within Hegel's vision of resolution will, at any rate, be the reading I will argue for in Chapters Six and Seven. It is certainly not the only possible reading – nor, indeed, is it the usual reading – for, as we shall see, Hegel gives ample grounds for suggesting that he finally abandons his Heraclitian heritage when he comes to work out his eschatological vision of a completion of the dialectic of both thought and being. I will argue, though, that the evidence for seeing Hegel as abandoning the principle of perpetual becoming is much less appealing and convincing than are the grounds for an opposing reading which insists on retaining his metaphysics of becoming. But let us turn to an examination of just what Hegel's commitments are to the principle of becoming.

Already in 1801 Hegel had expressed the principle of becoming in no uncertain terms: it is the highest task of philosophy "to comprehend the achieved existence [*das Gewordensein*] of the intelligible and real world as a becoming [*als ein Werden*]. Its being as a product must be comprehended as. . . [an] infinite activity of becoming and producing [*als unendlichen Tätigkeit des Werdens und Produzierens*]" (Diff 91). Hegel's mature (post-1806) philosophy incorporates this philosophic *Versuch*, or desideratum, into a basic ontological law.

The notion of being . . . must mean becoming; . . . becoming is precisely the explicit statement of what being is in its truth (SL §88 *Zusatz*).

The reality and existence of the *Gestalten* of spirit . . . [are to be found] only as grounded in becoming, and possess their truth only in so far as they are and remain in it (PhS 212).

Being . . . that is living . . . [and not inorganic, is not inert but a] fluid substance of pure movement [*ein flüssige Substanz der reinen Bewegung*], . . . a process . . . and flux [*Flüssigkeit*] (PhS 106f).

Still, shortly after announcing the principle that the truth of being is becoming in his "shorter" *Logic*, Hegel notes that the term "becoming" is hardly self-explanatory, and taken as "*mere logical becoming*" is "an extremely poor term," needing "to grow in depth and weight of meaning" (SL §88 *Zusatz*). I wish to discuss in this section what Hegel means by "mere logical becoming" – which despite his belittlement of it in SL §88, is quite important for Hegel in its own right – as well as how he seeks to give the notion of becoming a fuller "depth and weight of meaning."

a. "*Mere Logical Becoming*"

First, then, what does Hegel mean by "mere logical becoming"? This is a conception which is unfortunately passed over by many detractors of Hegel, an oversight which is largely responsible for their feeling that Hegel's logic is reducible to "utter absurdity"³⁵ by controverting the principle of noncontradiction through a "primitive error" and naive confusion about logic.³⁶ This criticism is directed against Hegel's assertion that becoming is to be defined as the *identity of being and nothing* (SL §86–89; LL 82ff).

"Mere logical becoming" refers in general to the transition from one abstract category of thought to another, without reference to specific existential determinations of those categories. The concept of becoming, taken in its "merely logical" sense, is itself such a category, and arises from a consideration of the abstract categories of "being" and "nothing." "Being," taken abstractly – as opposed to a specific determinate being, a "*Dasein*," e.g., a tree or a person or a Greek play – is "indeterminate immediacy, . . . [having] no diversity within itself" (LL 82). As Parmenides says in his poem "On Truth," "Being is not subject to division, for it is all alike, . . . abiding in simple equality with itself."³⁷

But, Hegel says, such a definition of being is exactly the same as the definition of the abstract category of "nothing"! For sheer indeterminacy of being amounts to saying that "nothing is to be intuited in it" (LL 82) – "it is a blank . . . featurelessness which precedes all

definite character" (SL §86 *Zusatz*), an "empty word" (LL 78), an "inchoate thought" (SL §85), completely unanalyzable and non"divisible" (as Parmenides puts it) into definite characteristics. If "pure being" were analyzable, and hence not a pure indeterminacy, it would be determined by some quality, defined and limited by something external to itself. But this, to cite Parmenides once again, would be to contradict what we mean by pure being: "Being lies in selfsameness, abiding in itself and by itself, . . . whole, one, and unmovable."³⁸

"Mere being," Hegel writes, "as pure abstraction, is therefore the absolutely negative, which, in a similarly immediate aspect, is just nothing" (SL §87). This is so because "being is an absolute absence of attributes, and so is nothing" (SL §87 *Zusatz*). The conclusion is that "being and nothing are the same" (SL §88 *Anmerkung*; LL 82).

This Hegelian maxim has been the source of much scorn and incredulity, being taken as an explicit refusal to acknowledge the principle of noncontradiction – for how can something both be and not be at the same time? – and as revealing Hegel, as F. E. Abbot puts it, as being either "simply idiotic" or, at best, simply "insincere."³⁹ But Hegel went to some pains to show that "no great expenditure of wit is needed to make fun of the maxim that being and nothing are the same, or to adduce absurdities from it" (SL §88 *Anmerkung*), and to show how this "seemingly startling and paradoxical" maxim (LL 84) escapes such absurdities.

The main source of confusion that Hegel sees as responsible for misunderstanding this maxim of the identity of being and nothing is that "the ordinary consciousness [i.e., common sense] brings with it to such an abstract logical proposition conceptions of something concrete, forgetting that what is in question is not any concrete thing but only the pure abstractions of being and nothing" (LL 85; v. SL §88 *Anmerkung*). It is this mistake which allows the wit to say that for Hegel "it is all the same whether this house is or is not or whether these hundred dollars are part of my fortune or not" (LL 85).⁴⁰ But, Hegel says,

there is much more to be said of these concrete objects than that they merely are or are not. Barren abstractions like being and nothing – [which are] the scantiest categories of thought anywhere to be found – are utterly inadequate to the nature of these objects. . . . When a concrete existence is disguised under the name of being and not-being, empty-headedness makes its usual mistake of speaking about, and having in the mind an image of, something else than what is in question . . . – it wants a richer and more complex conception than

abstract being and nothing, a pictorial conception of a concrete thing (SL §88 *Anmerkung*).

When we take the abstract logical categories of being and nothing as referring to determinate things, we see only a contradiction as expressed by the maxim of the identity of being and not-being. But if we confine ourselves to an analysis of the meaning of the terms taken in their abstract immediacy, we see that they denote the same abstract concept.

Now-what does this tell us about "mere logical becoming"? It is because the concepts of (pure or abstract) being and of (pure or abstract) nothing immediately "pass over into each other" (LL 83; SL 88 *Anmerkung*), that "the truth is neither being nor nothing, . . . but, each vanishing in its opposite, their truth is this movement . . . of becoming" (LL 82f).

J. M. E. McTaggart is right to point out in his *Commentary on Hegel's Logic* that it is misleading to view this becoming as involving a "real change" from one state of concrete existence to another.⁴¹ For, McTaggart says, this would require what Hegel has not yet deduced at this initial stage of his *Logic*, a concrete existence with determinate states. Hegel has thus far spoken only of two abstract categories which in fact conflate into the same meaning.⁴² But McTaggart is also right to say that Hegel is not intending to be misleading in this way.⁴³ Hegel himself distinguishes between real change and mere logical becoming. Real change occurs only with determinate being (*Dasein*), "where mere abstract being and nothing are replaced by a concrete existent" (SL §87 *Anmerkung*), while logical becoming refers only to the vanishing of the opposition and distinction between the abstract categories of being and nothing.⁴⁴ Put otherwise, becoming signifies *real change of substance* only when the subject of change is a concrete thing, whereas when we have only the abstract categories of being and nothing in view, becoming signifies only "logical transition" or the "logical deduction" of the "movement of thought" from the one category to the other (SL §87 *Anmerkung*).

The ("merely") logical significance of becoming is not as empty as it might seem, however. For while it says nothing about real change of substance, it nevertheless points to the absolutely crucial principle in Hegel's philosophy that "there is no immediacy without mediation" (e.g., SL §66 & *Anmerkung*, 70, 75; LL 68). The categories of pure being and pure nothing are not accurately definable simply as immediately opposing concepts, but are mediated by each other, being essentially connected.

An example of how this principle of mediation is to be understood with regard to the logical notion of becoming is the concept of a *beginning*. "In its beginning," Hegel writes, "the thing is *not* yet, but it is more than merely nothing, for its being is already in the beginning, . . . only [this being is to be understood] with an eye to its further development" (SL §88 *Anmerkung*). A beginning is mediated by its result, by its *telos*, what it is to become but is not yet. Without this mediation, there would literally be no beginning, for the very concept of a beginning directly implies a connection with a process of development.

This example, which Hegel refers to as a "tolerably plain example . . . [of] the unity of being and nothing [taken as an abstract principle of logic]" (SL §88 *Anmerkung*), shows that Hegel is not guilty of transgressing the principle of noncontradiction in any simplistic way.⁴⁵ For it is in two different senses that something which begins is and is *not*: it is as an immediate fact, but (*qua* potentiality) it is *not* yet what it points to as its truth, namely, its developed nature. This is precisely what Aristotle was saying in the passage from his *Metaphysics* cited above p. 000) when he writes that "that which 'is' has two senses, [so that] we must say that everything changes from that which is potentially to that which is actually." As we noted in our discussion of the Aristotelian influence on Hegel's theory of substance, it is this double character of being which accounts for the internal impulse (force, power) of becoming, so that it is impossible to describe being as an inert and unchanging "repose."⁴⁶

b. The Deeper Significance of Becoming

The transition from the "merely logical" significance of becoming to the concept of becoming which has "grown in depth and weight of meaning" parallels the shift in attention from abstract categories of thought to concrete things. With this shift, being (*das Sein*) becomes concrete existence (*das Dasein*), nothing (*das Nichts*) becomes negation (*die Negation*) or determinate difference (*der bestimmte Unterschied*), and logical transition becomes substantial change or development. The shift to the concrete existent is prepared for in the *Logic* by the consideration that "in the case of mere being and nothing, the distinction between the two is without a real ground, . . . both determinations being the same groundlessness" (SL §87 *Zusatz*). This is so because both abstract being and abstract nothing are conceptions with a total lack of determinate attributes, and hence with a total lack of anything which could distinguish them. With the thought of a ground

which can support the distinction between being and nothing, there arises the notion of a concrete thing, a being with specific, determinate attributes. *Dasein* is the ground which is required to preserve distinction, or difference, between determinations of a thing so that it does not sink into a purely indeterminate being (which is the same as nothing).⁴⁷

What makes the concrete existent *concrete* is, as Hegel puts it, the interplay or "reciprocity" of being and nothing in becoming (v. SL §89 *Zusatz*). This, of course, requires explanation, for neither "being" nor "nothing" nor "becoming" have the significance of merely logical terms when applied to the concrete thing. "Becoming" is here substantial change, the ontological development of the thing. "Nothing" is here determinate negation, the distinction between what the thing is and what it becomes or develops into. And "being" is a process of change. Being is *Da-sein*, being-there, existence in a situation in the world in which the thing is related to other things and affected by them so that it changes its nature, thus negating its previous character.

It is in this sense that the maxim that "becoming is the unity of being and nothing, but a *unity in difference*" (LL 86; SL §88 *Anmerkung*) is to be understood with regard to the concrete existent. "Being and nothing . . . are no longer present in the particular actual thing as they were as [the abstract categories of] being and nothing: they are now developed determinations, . . . the positive and the negative" (LL 85). The thing is defined both by what it is and by what it is not.⁴⁸ This "negative" of the thing plays several important roles: (1) it is the crucially *limiting* factor which demarcates the thing; (2) it is the definition of what the thing is *related* to; and (3) it is the determination of the project (the field of possibilities) which the thing can *become*. Hence the "positive" character of the thing is symbiotically connected with its "negative" character.

This connective reciprocity between the positive and the negative may be compared to the concept of the dynamic interplay of figure and "negative space" in aesthetics. "Negative space" is not seen as an absence, nor is the figure a self-enclosed image floating in empty space. The figure does not simply displace a space which it remains indifferent to. Negative space is rather the environment in which the figure is presented, and is essential to the way we see the figure. The surrounding space actively encroaches upon the figure, bringing it into relief in a visual field, and giving a systematic, patterned order to that field. The negative space is in this way absolutely crucial to the positive nature of the thing we view. To regard as a contradiction in terms Hegel's concept that the "negative" is a positive aspect of things

is, I believe, to make the same sort of mistake as calling the negative space of artworks a sheer absence.

The connective interplay of being and nothing (*qua* positive and negative) is the process of the *becoming* of the concrete existent. It is the very nature of life that things change: the "principle of life," as Hegel calls it, is that *being becomes*, or that the existent negates its "self-repose," "dissolving" or "sundering" its being in itself, and "becomes other" than what it was (v. PhS 106-8).

Existence involves "the movement of becoming-other to itself" (*die Bewegung, sich ein Anderes . . . zu werden*) (PhS 21), which is the element of negation or negativity in it. This "becoming-other" has a double significance: it is both the "concretion" (or "determination" or "expression" or "manifestation") of the thing, and the "externalization" of the thing. Becoming-other is concretion or expression, first of all, because it determines and specifies the thing by actualizing its inner possibilities. In the sphere of human existence, speech, for example, is an act which expresses or makes manifest a person's thoughts, and action expresses and makes manifest his or her inner intentions. So too a natural object expresses itself by the transformation of its inner "force" or "energy" or "power," as Hegel puts it, into action. Thus, for example, an atom expresses its inner structure (partly) by its bonding activity with other atoms. This "inner power" of natural substances can be compared to what today goes under the name of the "free energy" of chemical particles, or the "potential energy" of force in a mechanical system; in both cases, this is defined in terms of the potential for producing change, and is often described in terms of being a "power" to change.

Without such expression, neither the thought nor the intention nor the atomic structure would be "concrete," Hegel says. This is not to say that they are not *real*, but only that they lack determinacy and specification. They are open-ended possibilities or potentialities which could be expressed in many different ways, and they first of all become well-defined and determinate with their manifestation.

This activity of becoming-other is also, however, an "externalization" (*Entäußerung*) of the thing, for it alters the inner nature of the thing by bringing it into relation with other things. It defines the thing in terms of its place in a larger context or situation: it is no longer self-sufficient, but a part of a whole. Hence, in speaking or acting, I make my thought or intention public, open to the assessment of others. And by bonding with other atoms, the atom is defined in terms of its function within a new compound. Externalization is in this sense the "abandonment" of the "simple essence" of a thing to an external world

in which it is altered (PhS 471). But this abandonment is likewise the superseding of the "indifferent being" of the thing (PhS 471), for in becoming defined in terms of its interrelations with other things it is no longer indifferent to them but mutually affects and is affected by them.

This double nature of becoming is what accounts for Hegel's conception of the *Entäußerung*, or the becoming-other of the existent, as a principle of *creation*. Self-determination is "an eternal creation," according to Hegel (SL §214 *Anmerkung*). Self-externalization is equally a self-formation, and since this formative activity takes place only within the context of the intercorrelation of the existent with other existents, self-formation is at once a contribution to the formation of the world as a whole. In altering itself, the thing alters its surroundings. With "spirit becoming an 'other' to itself," Hegel writes, "and entering into [concrete] existence, it *creates a world*" (PhS 467).

The world is thus the result of the shaping activity of the beings which are its members, in their process of becoming concrete. Hence, the principle of becoming is what provides the "connection, or *Logos*, that permeates the being of the whole" (HPh 2:293) – where "whole" is not to be understood only in terms of the complete nature of the individual but also as the being of the world. Both the individual and the world are originally the infinite potentiality of spirit, awaiting the determinate, concrete structuring which arises through the creative becoming-other of beings in the world. Let us turn now to a discussion of Hegel's conception of *dialectic*, in which his theory of becoming and negativity is more fully developed.

3. The Nature of Dialectic

Probably more has been written about Hegel's theory of dialectic than any other aspect of his philosophy. It has been ridiculed as a "primitive schematization system,"⁴⁹ and praised as that which allows Hegel to "describe as few others have done the paradoxes, the problems, and the glories of spiritual life."⁵⁰ I am not going to attempt a systematic or thorough analysis of Hegel's theory of dialectic, but wish only to show how the principle of negativity serves to illuminate its structure, and to say a few words about the role of dialectic in Hegel's philosophy as a whole.⁵¹

Dialectic is both a method of demonstration and an ontological principle for Hegel. As method, it is meant to show the necessity of development, or transition, from one stage of consciousness or of

history, or from one abstract category of logic, to a higher stage or category.⁵² "Once the dialectic has been separated from proof," Hegel says, "the notion of [genuinely] philosophical demonstration has been lost" (PhS 40).

"Thus understood," Hegel writes, "the dialectical principle constitutes the life and soul of scientific progress, . . . the soul of all knowledge which is truly scientific" (SL §81 *Anmerkung & Zusatz*). I will say more about the nature of dialectic as a principle of philosophic method in Chapter Five, but here I wish to look at the sense in which dialectic is also an ontological principle, expressing the immanent teleological development of things from their potentialities to actuality. In this sense, dialectic is "the indwelling tendency outwards" (*immanente Hinausgehen*) of things (SL §81 *Anmerkung*), the impulse to externalization and concretion.

Hegel compares the "simple essence" of substance to a state of unreflective "satisfaction" (*Befriedung*), which is, however, a "self-consuming" state (*die unendliche Bewegung von welcher jenes ruhige Medium [simple substance] aufgezehrt wird*) (PhS 107–9). Substance, or being, defined as self-repose is not yet (or is only potentially) spirit, but only a "motionless tautology" of simple self-identity, $A=A$. And yet, Hegel says, "this self-identity of substance is no less *negativity*: its apparently fixed existence passes over into its dissolution" (PhS 34). Satisfaction is ephemeral, carrying within it a yearning desire, a dialectical impulse to self-expression and self-realization.

As such, "dialectic gives expression to a law which is felt in all consciousness . . . and experience," the law of the internal drive to reach out beyond a thing's isolation and fixedness to a fuller self-determination: dialectic is the dynamic of the self-transcendence of things (SL §81 *Zusatz*). In history, dialectic "exhibits the . . . successive gradations in the development of . . . the consciousness of freedom" (PhH 56). Hegel views freedom as the *telos* of history, and the actual course of history as a dialectical "development of [the human] capacity or potentiality [for freedom] striving to realize itself" (PhH 54). In logic, dialectic expresses the "dialectical nature of the idea in general,"⁵³ namely, that it is self-determined – that it assumes successive forms which it successively transcends: dialectic in logic is thus the exposition of "the necessary series of pure abstract forms which the idea successively assumes" (PhH 63). And in phenomenology, dialectic describes the "path of the natural consciousness which presses forward to true knowledge; or the way of the soul which journeys through the series of its own configurations as though they were sta-

tions appointed for it by its own nature, so that it may purify itself for the life of spirit and achieve finally, through a completed experience of itself, the awareness of what it really is in itself PhS 49). The phenomenological dialectic is a sort of *via dolorosa* which common sense consciousness must undergo in order to attain authentic spirituality; or it may be likened to the painful path which Plato describes in his *Republic* by which the person chained to the world of appearance becomes liberated and gradually, painfully, ascends through intermediate forms of opinion and belief to genuine knowledge.

There are two basic aspects of Hegel's anatomy of dialectic that I wish to look at here: (a) the idea that dialectic is advance or development through negativity; and (b) the sense in which dialectic is a mode of thought – a way of thinking about things – that is not necessarily employed in a speculative (i.e., truly philosophic) way, but may be misapplied. Both of these dimensions of the Hegelian dialectic will further illuminate the structure of his grand synthesis, since (a) the principle of negativity will expose the important qualification that harmony (of thought and being) can occur only through discord; and (b) the anatomy of dialectic as applying in different ways to different forms of thought will expose Hegel's belief that only with the working-through to a certain "shape" or *Gestalt* of thought – the standpoint of speculative philosophy or *Wissenschaft* – can a reconciliation of thought and being be achieved in its fullest sense.

a. Dialectic and Negativity

Dialectic is defined by Hegel as the power (or energy or force) of negativity. Negativity involves, in general, the opposing of something to its "other." When applied to epistemology, this is the "pathway of doubt" and "loss of immediate certainty" involved in the disparity between subject and object in the course of consciousness' experience of the world. And when applied to ontology, negativity is the *Entäußerung* of substance by which it "becomes other" to itself.

As we mentioned in section 2, this *Entäußerung* is one of two basic features of becoming, the other being the feature of *concretion*. We may say now that both of these features of becoming are due to the principle of negativity. Negativity is externalizing, because, according to Hegel, "what is undifferentiated is lifeless" (HPh 2:67), and it is precisely the immanent impulse of negativity which accounts for differentiation. Self-identity without negativity spells the death of being

for Hegel, whether this being is the being of an individual existent or the historical being of world culture. Hence, Hegel writes in his *Philosophy of History* that

the nation lives the same kind of life as the individual: . . . in the enjoyment of itself, the satisfaction of being exactly what it desired to be, . . . [and the consequent] abandonment of aspirations, . . . [the nation slips into a] merely customary life (like the watch wound up and going on of itself), into an activity without opposition. And this is what brings on its natural death. . . . Thus perish individuals, and thus perish nations, by a natural death (HPh 74f).⁵⁴

And negativity is also a making-concrete, a self-determination, in that self-development is brought about by "the dialectical force which deposes [the thing's] immediacy" and gives it a "specific character" (SL §239). Specificity is thus linked by Hegel to negativity: *Omnis determinatio est negatio*, as Spinoza says — every determination is a negation. Hegel frequently cites this dictum of Spinoza's (e.g., HPh 3:267, 286; SL §91 *Zusatz*; and cf. HPh 2:140), and he likes it so much because it suggests the positive aspect of negativity. While negativity is externalizing, it is also positive, for it makes the thing determinate, or individuates it.⁵⁵ Determinate negation (*bestimmte Negation*) gives the thing a content, which is to say that in actualizing a potentiality through its externalization, a thing is determinately negating various other potentialities, transforming the initially merely hypothetical nature of the thing into a concrete content.

Dialectic is thus the transition of things, and of knowledge, from potentiality or abstraction to actuality and content, but in such a way that the arising of a fuller determination points beyond itself to a further determination. Every determination is both a result and a new beginning, concrete and abstract, for it occurs within a process of the becoming of a thing (or of knowledge), and hence is concrete relative to the origin of the process but abstract relative to the *telos* of the whole process. A thing becomes more and more fully developed through this successive dialectic of self-reconstruction.

And so too does knowledge. Negativity is the principle by which thought disrupts its instinctive or immediate certainty, or by which thought becomes "split up" (PhM §408 *Zusatz*) or "divided" (Diff 87) into an opposition of consciousness to a specific object. *Dialectic is thus the very process of thinking*, where thought "loses itself in" and becomes "entangled in the contradiction" of its nonidentity with its object,⁵⁶ and yet where this very negativity urges thought to "persevere," to "work

out in itself the solution to its own contradiction" (SL §11). It is in this sense that Kojève calls dialectic "a series of successive 'conversions'" whereby the relation of consciousness to the world is progressively transformed.⁵⁷ Kant, too, is close to Hegel's insight, in that he feels that the dialectic of reason involves thought in a search which it cannot avoid since it is driven to the search by an inner impulse to satisfy itself.⁵⁸ But while for Kant this search precipitates thought into illusion, for Hegel it leads to the insight that reality is in truth dialectical.

Kierkegaard constantly argues that Hegel's dialectic involves an illicit forcing of movement and transition into his logic. Movement is a "chimera" and "mirage" which is "produced only on paper" in Hegel's dialectic.⁵⁹ Hegel's "introduction of movement into logic," Kierkegaard asserts, "is a sheer confusion,"⁶⁰ for "the category of transition [or becoming, or movement] is itself a *breach of immanence, a leap*,"⁶¹ as opposed to the immanent necessity Hegel associates with it.⁶²

Many other commentators believe the same thing. George Stack, for example, writes that "Hegelian logic could not account for the process of becoming or genesis, and was especially unable to account for the transition from possibility to actuality in an individual being's development."⁶³ And Calvin Schrag says flatly that "everything that Hegel has to say about becoming and movement in his logic is illusory."⁶⁴

Unfortunately, all of these views are based on a profound misunderstanding – the misunderstanding that becoming is regarded by Hegel as the movement of abstract categories of logic disembodied from any concrete historical situation and from any existing individual who thinks those categories. But Hegel is quite clear on this point. He says that "the principle of development, . . . [the principle of] a capacity or potentiality striving to realize itself, [is a] formal conception [which] finds actual existence in spirit, which has the history of the world for its theater and sphere of realization" (PhH 54). The formal conception of dialectic, Hegel's logic, is but the description of the lawlike patterns of development which are concretely exemplified and realized in the world.⁶⁵

Hence, the suggestion that Hegel's dialectic of becoming is a "mirage" which "takes place only on paper," or that Hegel "could not account for becoming" or "the transition from possibility to actuality," is completely unwarranted. This sort of criticism reflects, I suppose, a distaste for Hegel's idealism in general, where the truth of the being of objects is ultimately the "thing thought," the object for-consciousness. This leads Kierkegaard and others to the conclusion that becoming and dialectic only occur for Hegel "in the head" and not

in concrete existents in the world. But this is simply not Hegel's view, for, as we have seen, the fact is that the exemplification and manifestation of that truth takes place in concretely situated beings in the world. Hegel makes this point, which is the very crux of his grand synthesis, endlessly. The man of "sound common sense" . . . holds the opinion that philosophy is concerned only with *Gedankendingen* ['thought-things' or mental entities]." But, Hegel continues, while philosophy "does have to do with these pure essences too," its task is to recognize how they are "concretely embodied in existing things" (PhS 78f).

b. Dialectic as a Mode of Thought

Dialectic, as we have seen, is transition (in both thought and being) brought about by negativity. We have also noted that an aspect of this negativity is the opposition and contradiction into which things are thrown by their "becoming-other." "Antinomy," as Hegel says, "is the dialectical influence in logic" (SL §48 *Anmerkung*). And since logic is but the formal expression of principles which are concretely exhibited in the world, antinomy is the "dialectical influence" in all actual things: "contradiction is the very moving principle of the world" (SL §119 *Zusatz*). Contradiction, for Hegel, involves the undermining of a thing's self-identity by the "other" to which it is related and by which it becomes defined. In the alienating aspect of its *Entäußerung*, a thing exemplifies the Sartrean paradox that it "is what it is not" (its 'other') and "is not what it is" (the simple, immediate coinciding or identity with self).⁶⁶

This brings us to an important point: Hegel says that it is just this insight into dialectic, that negativity involves contradiction, which characterizes *scepticism*.⁶⁷ In this sense, then, dialectic is a mode of thought or way of seeing things which can lead to the ruin of knowledge. This is a fascinating aspect of Hegel's philosophy, that *it is one and the same insight and way of thinking about things* – the insight into the dialectical force of negativity inherent in things – which characterizes both scepticism (the ruin of knowledge) and the speculative philosophy which is the way to what Hegel calls "absolute knowledge."

Hegel regards scepticism as having a profound grasp of reality, and he says that his own "speculative logic" itself takes over "the dialectic of scepticism, for this negativity which is characteristic of scepticism likewise belongs to true knowledge" (HPh 2:330; and cf. 357; SL §81 *Zusatz*). In this sense, Hegel states that "we must undoubt-

edly grant the invincibility of scepticism" (HPh 2:329). But finally, Hegel views scepticism as a sort of "paralysis" which people "give themselves over to," an "abyss" in which all certainty is swallowed up, and a deep despair which leads to the "decay of the world" because of the inability to affirm and give stability to any positive value (HPh 2:329, 371, 372).⁶⁸

Put very generally, the great merit of scepticism is that it sees the contradictory character of things, that is, that any determination is conditioned by its opposite, or that any proposition is dialectically in conflict with equally compelling, opposing propositions. Scepticism is "the art of dissolving all that is determinate" (HPh 2:329), and as such it demonstrates the inherent flux and discord of reality which is so important in Hegel's philosophy. This is for Hegel a deep insight into the unity of opposites and the insufficiency of viewing things as simple self-identities. Hence, scepticism is "the far-seeing power [of thought] which is requisite in order to recognize the determinations of negation and opposition everywhere present in everything concrete and in all that is thought" (HPh 2:365). But this "art of dissolving all that is determinate" is also the root of *nihilism*, and this is the great defect and danger of scepticism, that "it remains content with this purely negative result of dialectic," just as Kant did with his antinomies and the dialectic of reason, and thus "mistakes the true value of its result" (SL §82 *Zusatz*). The question now arises as to how Hegel rises above this "purely negative result" – which, however negative, he calls necessary and true – and in what sense dialectic can achieve this transcendence without the simple abolishment of its insight and truth.

Hegel's solution here is to distinguish between two ways of viewing the negativity of dialectic, one which sees oppositions only in a state of "equilibrium" or of "offsetting polarity," so that no mediation or resolution of them is possible, and the other which sees the true value of opposition as pointing to a higher unity. The first sees only discord in the multiplicity and particularity of reality; the second finds the Miltonian "hidden soul of harmony through mazes running," the One in the Many, discord resolving itself into unity. In this way, dialectic is in one sense the characteristic of an incomplete form of thought – what Hegel, following Kant, calls the understanding (*Verstand*) – and in another sense points beyond itself to a higher form of thought, reason (*Vernunft*).⁶⁹

The understanding employs dialectic to rigidly exclude the mediation of opposites. In this sense, dialectic sets up an "equilibrium" of opposite determinations, so that every opposing determination has equal value. This is just what leads to scepticism, the *epoché* or

suspension of judgment (which Hegel calls "paralysis") in the face of equally competing opposites. In this way, "dialectic is just a subjective see-sawing" from one determination to its opposite (SL §81 *Anmerkung*). Hegel refers to this as the "bad infinite" (*die schlechte Unendlichkeit*) of the understanding (e.g., HPh 2:268; SL §§45 *Zusatz*, 94 & *Zusatz*, 95 & *Zusatz*, 104 *Zusatz*, 194 & *Zusatz*) – the opposing of one finite determination to another finite determination where the opposition effects an equal "neutralization" of its terms. The "true infinite" of reason, on the other hand, involves the "connective reference" and "reciprocal dependence" of the opposites, so that their opposition or mutual negation does not result in a neutralization, but in a "completer notion," that is, in a concrete unity of the opposing terms (v. SL §95 *Anmerkung*).

An example may help. Hegel views it as a mistake to regard freedom and necessity as polar opposites and as equally legitimate but exclusionary alternatives. If they were equal in this way – as the Kantian antinomy has it, and as the sceptic has it – the only options for viewing human action would be the result of completely cancelling one term (by arbitrary fiat)⁷⁰ and thus seeing oneself either as free in Hegel's sense of negative freedom (= nihilism),⁷¹ or doomed to necessity in Hegel's sense of "merely external necessity" (= tychism, fatalism, "the irrational void of necessity" [PhS 443]). For these are the only senses of freedom and necessity which are left when we disallow any "reciprocal dependence" of the one on the other. On the other hand, by seeing that the opposition of freedom and necessity is not a polar equilibrium of exclusionary terms, but involves the two terms negating each other in a *positive* way – so that (positive) freedom negates *external* necessity (fate), and (rational) necessity negates *negative* freedom (nihilism) – we arrive at the completer notion of freedom which is self-limited by the "real, inward necessity" (SL §35 *Zusatz*) of duty, and of necessity which is the autonomous expression of self-determination.

An ethical man is aware that the tenor of his conduct is essentially obligatory and necessary. But this is so far from making any abatement from his freedom, that without it real and rational freedom could not be distinguished from arbitrary choice – a freedom which is merely potential (SL §158 *Zusatz*).

We are now in a position to understand the ambiguous significance of dialectic in Hegel's philosophy. Hegel is concerned to affirm "the merit and rights of the understanding" in his philosophy

(SL §80 *Zusatz*), for while the understanding does not rise to the recognition of the synthesis of opposites, its analytic dissection of things is necessary for true knowledge. This is so because it "apprehends existing objects in their specific differences" (SL §80 *Zusatz*), which is an absolutely essential component of our definition of objects. The understanding gives us an insight into the determinateness of objects, and as such Hegel says that it is "indispensable" and that "no object in the world can ever be wholly [known] if it does not give full satisfaction to the canons of the understanding" (SL §80 *Zusatz*). But when the understanding employs dialectic, this leads to scepticism (SL §81 *Anmerkung*). For the understanding apprehends things in the fixity of their determinateness, and dialectic, which opposes one thing to another, can only lead to exclusionary difference when its objects are apprehended in this way. This is the heart of scepticism, which Hegel also sees as having a large element of sophistry in it (v. PhS 124; cf. 77f). Plato also described this use of dialectic as sophistry:

If anyone . . . imagines he has discovered an embarrassing puzzle [in such propositions as 'the same is different and the different is the same'], and takes delight in reducing argument to a *tug of war*, he is wasting his pains on a triviality.

. . . Taking pleasure in perpetually parading such contradictions in argument – that is not genuine criticism, but may be recognized as the callow off-spring of a too recent contact with reality.

. . . Yes, my friend, the attempt to separate every thing from every other thing not only strikes a discordant note but amounts to a crude defiance of the philosophical Muse.⁷²

From the perspective of reason, however, the understanding's employment of dialectic exhibits something very important, the exposure of the one-sidedness and limitation of fixed oppositions, so that this dialectic *points beyond itself* to a higher perspective. "Dialectic in this higher sense . . . does not conclude with a negative result, for it demonstrates the union of opposites which have annulled themselves" (PhH 2:52). The oppositions of scepticism are seen to annul themselves from the perspective of philosophical reason. Reason sees what Plato calls the "discordant note" struck by "the attempt to separate every thing from every other thing." In this way, "the result of dialectic is positive" (SL §82 *Anmerkung*), for it exposes the "bad infinite" of the understanding's attempt to fix its distinctions at all

costs, and points to the resolution of this sceptical "tug of war" or "sawing" between opposites to the unifying activity of reason. Dialectic "constitutes the real and true . . . exaltation [*Erhebung*] above the finite [understanding]" (SL §81 *Anmerkung*).

Dialectic, then, may be employed in different ways. When employed by the understanding, it results in the polarizing of mutually excluding determinations which leads to the nihilism of scepticism. When employed by reason, dialectic brings these opposing determinations together in a "completer notion" which reflects the "*immanenter Zusammenhang*," the immanent connectedness (SL §81 *Anmerkung*), of the opposing determinations. The interesting point is that the employment of dialectic by the understanding dialectically overcomes itself and points beyond itself to the "higher sense of dialectic," dialectic as employed by reason. For the analytic method of the understanding leads to contradictions which the understanding can neither avoid nor resolve,⁷³ and thus reveals its own limitations. The dialectic of the understanding, then, is a way of thinking which, in seeing only the differentiation and opposition between things, becomes burdened with a sense of discord – the "dismembered world" – without any glimmering of harmony. But this is a burden which thought is finally incapable of sustaining, and which internally collapses and transcends itself towards a rational-dialectical way of thought which sees the interconnections and mediations between opposing phenomena, and hence the harmony at the heart of discord.⁷⁴

In this chapter we have accomplished two things. First, we have given a detailed description and analysis of the anatomy of Hegel's concept of becoming, (a) in its "merely logical" significance as well as in its "deeper meaning," and (b) in terms of its reliance on the principle of negativity. Second, we have seen how Hegel employs his concept of becoming to illuminate central aspects of his ontology and epistemology – specifically, his theory of substance and his notion of the dialectical character of thought and being.

This notion of the dialectical character of things is the locus of Hegel's dispute with Kant's depiction of the nature of thought and being. For while Kant would agree with Hegel that dialectic does actually describe an important characteristic of thought, Kant views this as the "*euthanasia* of pure reason,"⁷⁵ or as Hegel describes the Kantian view, as the "*derangement* of mind" (HPh 3:451). Hegel, on the other hand, sees the dialectical character of thought not as pathology or as the darkness of illusion, but as expressing a profound insight into the true structure of the world. This is perhaps the most important lesson to be learned from the present chapter. It is because the dialectic

tical structure of thought reflects the dialectical structure of the world that Hegel argues that thought and being, consciousness and object, subject and substance, do not contradict each other but mutually illuminate each other.

This is the basic principle of Hegel's grand synthesis, and we have now seen how this synthetic principle lies at the heart of his absolute idealist vision and of his attempt to overcome scepticism. Thought is not fundamentally alienated from being, but this alienation is rather the very act of thought externalizing itself into a world, making itself concrete, giving itself shape, and in this very act creating its world. From the perspective of the dialectic of reason we are able to reconceive this alienation as nourishing a deeper principle of reconciliation, where thought finds itself reflected in the world, and where discord is nothing but the act of thought coming to terms with itself. Scepticism misconstrues the dialectical character of reality by failing to reach beyond its doubt to this vision of reconciliation, and we might say that Hegel's grand synthesis is his project for pointing out the way towards a philosophic reconception where such a vision becomes possible.

Chapter Five

HEGEL'S PHILOSOPHIC METHOD: THE "SELF-CONSTRUCTION OF REASON"

*It were far better never to think of investigating truth
at all, than to do so without a method.*

Descartes

At the heart of Hegel's project for rethinking the relation between thought and being is his radical reconception of the nature of philosophic method. For, on the one hand, Hegel's new method of demonstration is described as being internal to the self-analyzing character of thought. The stress here must be placed on "internal," since Hegel is concerned to show that method is not something externally applied to its subject matter (thought), but is nothing other than the immanent structure of thought itself. On the other hand, method is not simply to be sought in the inward laws and processes of thought but must be seen as having and "outward," ontological dimension as well. Since his philosophy is characterized throughout by his conviction of the unity of thought and being, Hegel's method is both intrinsic to thought and immanent in the world (i.e., in being) as well.¹

In this chapter, we will trace out this double character of Hegel's philosophic method, focusing on his general conception of method as what he calls the "self-construction of reason" (Diff 113).² Our discussion will point backwards to various central motifs of previous chapters, recovering, most importantly, the themes of dialectic and teleology, and showing how these guiding threads of Hegel's philosophy help to illuminate his notion of the self-constructing, self-shaping, self-analyzing character of reason, which is the key to

understanding his new method. At the same time, our discussion will point forward to our culminating two chapters and the theme of Hegel's attempt to resolve the dialectic of becoming in Absolute Knowledge. For we will find, as we reach the close of the present chapter and an investigation into the peculiarly *circular* character of Hegel's new method of demonstration, that we are on the threshold leading to the troubling concept of Absolute Knowledge. It is in seeing how Hegel conceives of method as circling back to its origin that the notion of a *recollective* cognition of the whole course of the evolution of thought and being emerges, and it is precisely this process of recollection which is the central principle of his anatomy of Absolute Knowledge.

1. Introductory Remarks on Method

Hegel perhaps exaggerates when he says that "experience and history teach us . . . that peoples . . . have never learned anything from history" (PhS 6).³ But philosophers, on the whole, have indeed exhibited a peculiar susceptibility towards being unphased by certain lessons of history. One would think that for all the times one had read of a philosopher's claim to have "once and for all" grounded philosophy in "the one true method" – and then invariably witnessed how utterly unconvincing the claim appeared to its readers – that philosophers would give up repeating this boast. But no, this boast is like a magnet to philosophers, an apparently irresistible force luring one after another to it.

The motivation for making this boast seems to be, at least in part, the feeling that one's insights and arguments would lose all their force if they were not justified by a rigorous method which, it is hoped, will confer an air of inevitability, indubitability and absolute necessity on them. As Hegel puts it, philosophy bereft of a systematic method "can only be expected to give expression to personal peculiarities of mind, having no principle for the regulation of its contents" (SL §14 *Anmerkung*). The result, all too often, is that insights and arguments are forced into the mould of a method which has not generated them at all, and this only serves to cast aspersions on whatever legitimate value these insights may have had.

We could illustrate this by pointing to any number of examples of philosophic claims purporting to be conclusions derived from "the one true method" which have been refuted. Descartes, for all his genius and for all the unquestionable philosophic merit of his method, offers

an excellent example. Various of his theories – e.g., about the nature of the heavens, about the “animal spirits” of the body, and about certain laws of physics – which he presents as indubitable, inevitable, and necessary conclusions, “having the force of mathematical demonstrations” and following from “no other principle” than that of his method,⁴ have been persuasively refuted.

Hegel, of course, is no exception to the rule. He says that his philosophy offers us “an altogether new concept of scientific procedure” which is “the only true standpoint” – “the only true method” – and which, in leading us in a resistless, necessary course to conclusions, “first truly grounds . . . knowledge in its whole compass . . . and completeness” (LL 27, 54, 72). In Hegel’s desire for completeness, however, he frequently presents as absolutely necessary insights which seem highly dubious or actually false in the light of contemporary views. To cite one of his more outlandish and exceptionable arguments, Hegel seeks to demonstrate in his anthropology that racial differences are necessary, and inevitably involve specifically differentiated features of character and mental capacity (see PhM §393 *Zusatz*). And many of his claims about astronomy, chemistry, and physics, so far from being necessary conclusions, or in any way based on his method, are clearly based on the “state of the art” of nineteenth-century science, and have since been refuted. Thus Hegel is rightly open to the charge that, in Charles Taylor’s words, while his logic “is a tissue of powerful arguments which show the weakness of other philosophical positions, . . . [he] tries at crucial moments to force them further,” to make them fit into the framework of his method and thereby possess a necessity they do not deserve.⁵

But let us pause. Surely no great expenditure of wit is required to cast scorn upon this perennial boastfulness of philosophers; but while a measure of sarcasm is not out of place, it is dangerous to get carried away. To reject the insights and arguments of a philosophy because its method has been misadvertised as a vessel of absolute necessity, or to reject the method itself as worthless for the same reason, is an unreflective and unfair response in the extreme. As for Hegel, this response has been far wider than with any other philosopher of comparable stature. But his method is in many ways the least deserving of such a response.

In the first place, few philosophers can say with as much truth as Hegel that they have constructed “an altogether new concept of scientific procedure.” Whatever its defects and excesses, it is this new methodology which allows Hegel to express one of the great visions of human thought and culture, and of the ultimate unity and con-

nectedness of our world in the midst of change and discord. As we have seen, Hegel's new method of philosophic inquiry demands of us, and opens up a way for us, "to become acquainted with . . . our own thought . . . in a new way," leading to a way of seeing the relation between ourselves and our world which, without minimizing the recurring rhythm of alienation and discord, also insists on the power of mind to find purpose and meaning in its life, and to creatively transform and gain reconciliation with its world.

Second, Hegel's claim to build a new foundation for philosophy, while on the surface a wearisomely perennial claim, is in other ways unique. For this new foundation does not simply purport to account for the truths of previous philosophies while explaining more – the usual justification given for constructing a new system – but aims to embrace all previous philosophies and to link them together in a single spirit. Hegel's philosophy is unique in this way, that it is not meant to refute previous philosophies but rather to show their essential unity, the harmony throughout their various discords. Hence in a letter to Hermann Hinrichs (a member of the Hegelian school), Hegel corrects a misapprehension on Hinrichs's part "that the Absolute has first comprehended itself only in my [Hegel's] philosophy; . . . for every philosophy is the self-comprehension of the Absolute."⁶

When Kant, to cite but one of many possible examples, says that "inasmuch as there is, objectively speaking, still only one human reason, there cannot be many philosophies," he strikes the time-worn refrain that only *his* philosophy is really *philosophy*: "Before the advent of critical philosophy there was no philosophy."⁷ But when Hegel says that there is but "one truth," he means that "each [philosophy] in turn . . . [is] the one and true philosophy" (HPh 1:17f), for "philosophy . . . is the totality of [its] forms, . . . where all principles are preserved" and contribute to the "one truth" (HPh 3:546). The seeming hubris of the claim to have discovered the "one true method" is, in Hegel's case, tempered by a spirit of conciliation rare, and perhaps unparalleled, in the history of philosophy.⁸

2. Method and Reason

Perhaps the first thing that must be said about Hegel's conception of method is that it is not something externally applied to the subject matter of philosophy (which Hegel defines as thought in general), but is immanent in thought: "method is not an extraneous form, but the soul and notion of the content [of thought]" (SL §242).⁹ Philosophic

method, then, is not to be sought from some other successful science, like the geometric or axiomatic method of mathematics, or the hypothetico-deductive or inductive methods of other theoretical sciences, but is to be found in the very nature of the way we think.¹⁰ Hegel claims that "in every other science the subject matter and the scientific method are distinguished from each other" (LL 43), whereas in (speculative) philosophy they coincide, for the method is in fact a *self-construction* of the subject matter, thought or reason.

Thought, for Hegel, is defined as "the self-developing totality of its laws, . . . [and] these laws are the work of thought itself, not facts which it finds [outside itself] and must submit to" (SL §19 *Anmerkung*). Thus method is an analysis of thought, but an analysis which is carried out by thought itself, so that philosophic method amounts to a "study of mind as self-instruction and self-education in its very essence" (PhM §387 *Anmerkung*). The proper method of philosophy is in this way synonymous with the self-analyzing activity of reason: in the process of its self-education, reason progressively shapes and constructs itself into ever more comprehensive forms and categories, and this self-constructing dialectic is at the same time the immanent development of philosophic method.

Still, while Hegel's philosophic method is to be a "self-construction of reason," a *Selbstproduktion* and *Selbstkonstruieren*, we have noted that his logic is also didactic, having the purpose of "acquainting us with our own thought in a new way." Hegel in fact defines logic as an education in "how to think" (LL 226). Hence, we must not understand his claim that thought is a self-producing method to mean that the "one true method" is transparent in the way we think. Just as we have seen that the guiding purpose of Hegel's philosophy, his attempt to demonstrate a grand synthesis of thought and being, steadfastly refuses to propose an immediate coinciding of its terms, so too philosophic method cannot be found lying ready-to-hand in the "immediate," "natural" consciousness. Precisely because method is not applied to thought from a distance, as it were, but is internal to the "pathway of doubt" and the struggle of development which characterizes the self-education of thought, the nature of philosophic method must be progressively discovered, just as thought comes to discover its real nature in the process of its evolution. For this reason, method is not simply a tool used in our search for truth, but is in a profound sense a *search for itself*, a process of self-construction and self-analysis which is immanent in the path of self-discovery by thought.

One of Hegel's most important aphorisms is that "*das Bekannte*

überhaupt ist darum, weil es bekannt ist, nicht erkannt" (Phän 35). This basic epistemological principle is repeated, although with no conscious reference to Hegel, by both Heidegger and Wittgenstein, each of whom share Hegel's preoccupation with method and his belief that method cannot be found ready-to-hand. Thus Heidegger writes that "to be cognizant, to know, is not mere familiarity with concepts."¹¹ This is also Wittgenstein's point when he says that *"die für uns wichtigsten Aspekte der Dinge sind durch ihre Einfachheit und Alltäglichkeit verborgen. (Man kann es nicht bemerken, – weil man es immer vor Augen hat). Die Eigentlichen Grundlagen seiner Forschung fallen dem Menschen gar nicht auf."*¹² In the context of the present discussion, the point is that while in one way we have a direct access to philosophic method, since it is the very structure of our own processes of thought, in another sense we require a "new way of becoming acquainted with our thought" in order to uncover this method – just because we feel so familiar with our thought, and take its operations for granted. It is in this sense that we may think of Hegel's method in the Wittgensteinian sense, as *therapy*.¹³ Yet since thought is self-analyzing for Hegel, philosophic method is not like the psychiatrist who is analyzing someone else's psyche, but rather like the one who is engaged in self-analysis or self-therapy. Or, to change the metaphor, method is not so much like the author who writes a biographical text, but like the one who is engaged in an autobiographical narrative.

Well, what is Hegel's "altogether new concept of scientific procedure"? We have just remarked that this method is to reflect the immanent structure of thought, and thus we have the clue to the basic character of Hegel's method in his analysis of thought. Now the crucial thing about thought for Hegel is that it "moves," that is, that it is a continuous process of development. As Barth puts it, *"der Begriff"* for Hegel *"ist Ereignis. . . . [Es] ist nicht ein irgendwie und irgendwo vorfindliches Ergebnis, sondern . . . die unbeschränkte Notwendigkeit seiner . . . Selbstvollstreckung."*¹⁴ Concepts are *events*, "self-executing" events, which is to say that thought has a necessarily historical, temporal manifestation in which it "moves" or develops. Hegel's anatomy of this motion of thought, which serves as the heuristic clue to the proper portrayal of the developmental structure of his new philosophic method, is highlighted by two central principles which we have already introduced in our analysis of his grand synthesis – the principles of the intrinsically *teleological* and *dialectical* character of thought and being. We will discuss the specifically teleological character of Hegel's method in section 4 below, turning first to Hegel's description of his method as dialectical.

3. Method as Dialectic

A good point of departure for understanding in what sense Hegel's new method is a dialectical method may be found by returning to the contrast he develops between *Verstand* and *Vernunft*. In fact, Hegel explicitly states that the goal of his method is to show that "*reason . . . gives demonstration a meaning quite different from that of the understanding*" (SL §36 Zusatz). We saw in Chapter Four that both the understanding and reason employ dialectic, but in different ways. The understanding's use of dialectic is to isolate and fix determinations of thought into exclusionary oppositions, while the dialectical character of reason lies in its unifying of opposing determinations. Further, the categories of thought are not unchanging for Hegel, but are informed by a teleological dynamic by which they progressively alter (deepen) their significance by developing in the course of the education of mind. And, finally, the dialectical character of method implicates thought in more than a formal way: as opposed to formal logic, and in keeping with the project of Hegel's grand synthesis, his new method views the principles of thought as having an ontological significance. Let us look a bit more closely at the dialectic character of Hegel's method, centering on (a) his portrait of the categories of thought as dynamic and evolving, in opposition to the view of static, unchanging categories; and (b) the nonformal, ontologically-committed logic which results from this portrait.

a. Dialectic and the Dynamic Character of Thought

As for the first point, Hegel's basic criticism of the Kantian "categories of the understanding" is that they are essentially "*ruhende tote Fächer der Intelligenz*," inert, dead pigeonholes of the mind (Diff 80). He believes that only under the perspective of the restlessly dialectical character of the categories of thought can we plausibly account for the fact of the *Bildung* of knowledge. In this way, the development of knowledge is not simply a learning to apply fixed categories with more and more facility, but the actual development of those categories into fuller and more explanatory principles. The category of "essence" (*das Wesen*), for example, which is the crucially important "middle" category of Hegel's logic (mediating "being" and "idea"), initially describes existents as pure *self-identities*, but with the development of our knowledge of things, essence comes to signify *difference* within identity, and finally the *unity* of identity and difference (v. LL 411ff; SL §§113–22). As a more concrete example we may look at the exactly parallel dialectic of self-becoming, where the young

child is first of all completely self-absorbed, an identity-unto-itself with all outer reality existing only for its own satisfaction; where, in the process of self-development, we come to see ourselves as reliant on and conditioned by others, and pass through phases of alienation and self-doubt which invariably accompany this dependence-on-others; and where, finally, we are capable of working through to a conception of ourselves as autonomous within the bonds of a social structure (the unity of self and other). This progressive enrichment of our knowledge involves the development of a category of thought from its immediate, least reflective stage to a more and more reflective, concrete determination.

Hegel's emphasis on regarding the categories of thought as developing, self-transforming concepts, is the source of his disillusionment with Kant's "discovery of all pure concepts of the understanding,"¹⁵ which Hegel calls, in one of his more polemical moods, "an outrage on science" (PhS 142). His point is that Kant simply "picks up the plurality of categories . . . as a welcome find, taking them from the various [forms of logical] judgements [which had been accepted by eighteenth century logicians], and complacently accepting them" (PhS 142). Hegel's criticism here is not new with him, but follows very much in the tradition of the post-Kantian German idealists, almost all of whom were quite suspicious of what seemed to them a patently artificial "discovery" by Kant of his twelve categories. But while Hegel is essentially just repeating what by this time is a well-worn litany against Kant, he develops a far more elaborate alternative conception of the categories of thought, which he also makes much more central to his larger methodological aims, than his predecessors did. The key to this alternative is the commitment to analyzing the actual process of development of our thought – by seeing thought "in gear" rather than "idling," as Wittgenstein puts it.¹⁶ This analysis is incorporated into the full sweep of Hegel's philosophy, from his logic to his metaphysics and epistemology, from his psychology and phenomenology to his philosophy of history, and results in an insight into the categories of thought which persistently undermines any appearance of fixedness and stasis, revealing them as inherently dynamic, historical, dialectical – engaged in an evolving process of self-construction.

b. Dialectic and the Grand Synthesis: The Dovetailing of Categories of Thought and Being

The second point mentioned above was that the dialectical character of method involves a nonformal appraisal of logic, so that

the principles or categories of thought have an ontological significance. This, of course, is a direct corollary of Hegel's grand synthesis of thought and being. Logic, which is first of all the science of thought, is also in its highest, "speculative" sense, ontology or metaphysics, the science of being: *"die logische Wissenschaft . . . macht die eigentliche Metaphysik . . . aus"* (WL 2:5). Hegel's logic is largely unique in this way, although as with so many of Hegel's central ideas, it is possible to trace this insistence on the dovetailing of the categories of thought and being back to certain suggestions and presentiments in the philosophy of Aristotle. Making full allowance for the differences between Aristotle's and Hegel's aims, Aristotle may be said to have come close to this identification of logic and metaphysics, for he felt that "the kinds of essential being are precisely those that are indicated by the figures of predication [i.e., the categories], . . . [and] 'being' has a meaning answering to each of these [categories]."¹⁷ Aristotle is of a spirit with Hegel, then, insofar as he felt that the categories of thought not only detail the ways in which we *think* about things, but equally describe the ways in which things *are*. But Aristotle's actual logic is formal, for his syllogistic describes forms of demonstration or proof which are indifferent to the content ascribed to its terms. If all B are A, and all C are B, then all C are A (this is Aristotle's "Barbara" syllogism), and the question of whether all B are *in fact* A, or all C are *in fact* B does not enter into the question of the validity of the syllogism.

Throughout his career, Hegel launched a sustained polemic against formal logic, or "the logic of the schools," logic which he regarded as cancelling the "life and spirit" out of thought by intentionally regarding its subject matter as devoid of content (v. PhS 41). He speaks of "the dead forms" or categories of logic¹⁸ in which "the spirit which is their living, concrete unity does not dwell in them," and says that "if logic is supposed to lack a substantial content, then the fault does not lie with its subject matter [i.e., thought], but solely with the way in which this subject matter is grasped" (LL 48). Hegel's point here is essentially that since formal logic refuses to allow its propositions to make ontological commitments – hence stripping them of all content, all "life and spirit" – it fails to uncover what is the most fundamental truth of thought, that it reaches out to being, seeking to find its inner laws and principles mirrored in the world of its outer experience.

Hegel of course does not deny the validity of formal logic – there is not a single sentence in all of his philosophy which makes any such denial, a fact which is not generally known, or at least not generally acknowledged, by many of the critics of his logic. His aim is only to

show its limits, and to propose an alternative methodology which goes beyond these limits. Thus, Hegel says of Aristotle that his logic is a "logic of the understanding," and that as formal logic, it is a "master-piece . . . and absolutely valuable," but tells us very little about the "truth of thought" (HPh 2:213, 219, 221). For the truth of thought has to do with its content as well as its form, with *what* is thought about as well as how it is thought about. The really interesting thing about Aristotle's philosophy, Hegel says, is that "it is not by any means founded on this [logic] . . . of the understanding" (HPh 2:223). That is, Aristotle's metaphysics, which is what gives us his great vision of the nature of reality, is not itself guided by his formal logic. The study of being *qua* being, of substance, of causality, of motion, of potency and act, and so on, depends on an ontological enquiry which is excluded from Aristotle's syllogistic.

Hegel believes, then, that for philosophy to be concerned with the "truth of thought" – the way in which thought tells us something about the world we live in as opposed to being concerned only with formal characteristics of propositions and rules of inference – it must unite logic and metaphysics. As Karl Barth puts it, "*die wahre Logik ist . . . auch die wahre Metaphysik, die Metaphysik des das Denken und das Gedachte in sich vereinigenden Geistes.*"¹⁹ To refuse this identification is to abandon the explanatory value of philosophy, Hegel feels – to abnegate philosophy's responsibility of investigating the nature of reality, the world in which we live. Hegel views the logic of the understanding as reducing explanation to tautology (PhS 94, 95), which in fact is precisely what it aims to do. Carnap aptly encapsulates the basic canon of this logic in his pronouncement that "all sentences of logic are tautological and devoid of content."²⁰

The motivation for the formalization of logic is largely the feeling that metaphysical speculation only mires us in unsolvable questions. By this view, metaphysics is on a par with mythology.²¹ Hegel has three things to say to this.

First, it is Hegel's contention that metaphysics is unavoidable even in our most simple and direct descriptions of our sensible experience. We cannot avoid employing theoretical terms in our portrayals of experience. When the claim is made, as Carnap does, that "meaningful metaphysical statements are impossible, [due to] the [very] task which metaphysics sets itself: to discover and formulate a kind of knowledge which is not accessible to empirical science,"²² the conception of "empirical science" employed here is not simply overly limited but actually a delusion. In other words, it is not simply that "the empirical" must be understood to embrace more than simply sense-experience in

order to legitimately describe the range and value of human experience, but that even in our description of sense-experience metaphysics is not eliminable. As Hegel says in his *Encyclopædia*, this is the "fundamental delusion in all scientific empiricism: it employs the metaphysical categories of matter, force, . . . infinity, etc., . . . and all the while it is unaware that it contains metaphysics" (SL §38; cf. HPh 2:155; 3:323, 456; PhN Intro. *Zusatz*).²³

Second, Hegel offers a different perspective on the historical diversity of metaphysical systems than that of the analytic understanding. Rather than concluding that this diversity proves the utter futility of metaphysical speculation,²⁴ Hegel says that we must see this diversity as expressing different perspectives on the same ultimate questions, perspectives which may be united in a synthetic whole, an all-embracing system. It is the analytic tendency of the understanding which holds these different metaphysical visions apart as isolated and exclusionary ideas, cancelling their "living link."

The understanding recoils from diversity, for it sees there only a sea of particularity, without standing back far enough to see the universal. As such it is "like an invalid recommended by the doctor to eat fruit, and who has cherries, plums or grapes before him, but pedantically refuses to take anything because no part of what is offered him is fruit, some of it being cherries, and the rest plums or grapes" (HPh 2:18)! The diversity, and consequent conflict, between various metaphysical visions is not, Hegel argues, the symptom of a diseased structure, but a sign of the essentially spiritual character of human knowledge, its dialectical character of unity-in-difference. Thus the different metaphysical systems "are not a mere collection of chance events, of expeditions of wandering knights, each going about fighting, struggling purposelessly, leaving no results to show for all his efforts. . . . In the activity of [the] thinking mind, there is a real connection; . . . it is with this belief in the [unifying] spirit [or *Logos*] of the world that we must proceed to history" (HPh 2:19). The history of philosophy is a dialectical progression of human thought, with its differing perspectives united by common themes and a common spirit of inquiry. Truth, as we saw in Chapter Two, is made present, or "operative," through this historical unfolding of human thought, and is not something which "casts off diversity like dross from pure metal," but "lives in this diversity alone."

Finally, the third and perhaps main point to be mentioned is that Hegel offers a positive alternative to the criterion of meaning and truth employed by the analytic understanding, which discloses to us a way of interpreting our thought so that it is not a purely formal

enterprise cut off from ontological commitments to the world we live in. This, again, is Hegel's basic vision of a grand synthesis of thought and being – of thought as the truth of its objects, of consciousness finding itself mirrored by its world, of the ultimate harmony of *Denken* and *Gedachte*. Thought is not the alienation of man from the world, but "the very heart of things, their simple life-pulse" (LL 37), and indeed without this connection of thought and world, Hegel is convinced that man would be doomed to a life of utter estrangement and uncertainty. Hegel's new philosophic method is in this way an exhibition of the fundamental principle of his idealism that "the determinations of the concept[s] [of thought] in the course of [their] development are from one point of view themselves [simply] concepts, but from another they take the form of existents:" for "thought . . . transforms it[self] into an intelligent world" (HPh 3:546). The dialectical development of the concepts of thought is at the same time – as one and the same process of development – the dynamic unfolding of the shapes of being in the world of human experience. And philosophic method is the internal structure of this intermediated evolution of thought and being, itself developing and transforming as the structure it traces out develops and transforms.

4. Method as Teleology

We indicated earlier that Hegel's method, in reflecting the nature of thought as a "self-movement," or an immanent process of development, must not only be dialectical but also *teleological*. For Hegel wishes to show that thought is not simply motion but *directed* motion, a teleological development from potentiality to actuality, from the implicit and immediate and abstract to the explicit and mediated and concrete. There are two related features of the teleological character of Hegel's method which call for special attention, and which will conclude the discussion of the present chapter: the nature of method as *system* and as a *circular* progression.

a. Teleology and System

Karl Barth makes the claim that "*Hegels Wollen und Vollbringen selbst besteht nicht in der Erfindung der dialektischen Methode als solcher, sondern in der Erfindung einer universalen Methode überhaupt. Das ist das Geniale [des Hegels].*"²⁵ Barth's point is that Hegel's method is not restricted to the description and analysis of the dialectical structure of

thought and being, but enables him to draw together the disperse threads of the manifestation and history of thought and being into a systematic whole, an organic totality. It is a first principle of Hegel's philosophic method that "truth is only possible as a universe or totality of thought" (SL §14). That truth is done justice only within a system is to say two things for Hegel: first, that truth is a whole or totality, as opposed to being confined within singular propositions; and second, that the parts of this totality must be structured in an organic way, as opposed to being regarded as diverse facts which are indifferent to each other. Both of these desiderata are brought together in Hegel's conception of truth as an expression of the immanent teleology which informs thought and reality.

"The true," Hegel says, "is the whole. But the whole is nothing other than the essence consummating itself through its development" (PhS 11). It is this self-consummating character of truth regarded as a structured, organic whole, which leads directly to the perspective of a teleological system of explanation. Kant, in his *Critique of Judgement*, argues that reason is invariably led to the ideal of an end – that is, to teleology – by the consideration of an organic whole. But he also argues that we can form no positive conception of this ideal, since an end is a thing-in-itself.²⁶ The whole line of German Idealists following Kant and culminating in Hegel argues against this idea that in formulating the ideal of action for an end, we already have formed a conception of it. Moreover, Hegel feels that there is no justification for allotting more cognitive certainty to mechanistic causality than to teleological causality – mechanism is no less a theoretical explanation of nature than is teleology, and more, mechanistic explanation is incomplete and points beyond itself to the conception of a purposive end (see SL §§195ff; LL 711ff, 737ff). Just as we saw the employment of dialectic by the understanding (*Verstand*) to collapse internally and point beyond itself to the synthetic, unifying dialectic of reason (*Vernunft*), so too mechanism can never satisfy the demand of reason for the unification of discrete phenomena into an integrated whole, and pushes past its limits to the standpoint of teleology.

The teleological character of things, the immanent impulse towards the development and consummation of their purpose and essence, reveals the incompleteness and one-sidedness which characterizes the individual stages in the course of this development. But the teleological nature of things shows not only the incompleteness of the thing vis-à-vis the completed nature of the individuum itself, it also reveals the dependence of the essence of the individuum on its *environment*. Things do not develop in a vacuum, but only in

interaction with other things. This is the basis of Hegel's heartfelt belief that things cannot be fully understood – nor, indeed, can they fully *be* – in isolation, but only when they are seen as (and exist as) situated and coordinated within a system of mutual determination and interconnection. We have already touched on this belief in the context of Hegel's theory of substance, and as an important point of difference between Hegel and Leibniz (Leibniz, recall, denies all "external denominations" of things, violating Hegel's principle of the *Entäußerung*, the externalizing character of all being). Hegel expresses the consequence of this for our knowledge of things in the following passage from his *Philosophie der Religion*:

Erkennen nennen wir dies, daß von einem Gegenstande nicht nur gewußt werde, daß er ist, sondern auch was er ist, und daß, was er ist, nicht nur überhaupt gewußt werde und man eine gewisse Kenntnis [of it as a particular, isolated existent], . . . sondern das Wissen von seinen Bestimmungen, seinem [extended, relational] Inhalt habe, daß dies Wissen ein erfülltes, bewährtes sei, worin die Notwendigkeit des Zusammenhanges dieses Bestimmungen gewußt wird (SW 12:50).

A truly scientific knowledge of things is possible only from the perspective which sees each individual thing in the context of a system of its interrelations-with-others, where it loses the appearance of isolation it takes on when we do not understand it as a member of an organic whole. And it is Hegel's conviction that only given the teleological conception of a unifying purpose or End can this organic perspective of science make sense. .

b. Teleology and Circularity

A further aspect of Hegel's teleological methodology is that it reconceives philosophic demonstration in terms of a *circular* progression.²⁷ A circular demonstration, in its vicious sense, has traditionally been regarded as involving premises which presuppose the conclusion that is to be established. If this were all there was to be said, then Hegel's method of demonstration would have the *circulus in probando* as its central feature. For, as we have seen, Hegel defines truth as "the process of its own becoming, the circle that presupposes its end as its goal, having its end also as its beginning." And his method, which is to give us access to truth, must also be circular. How could it be otherwise, since Hegel's method is precisely the tracing out of the immanent movement of thought, and thought is itself intrinsically circular: thought is the dialectical development of concepts, and concepts are

defined by Hegel as "self-movements, circles" (PhS 20).²⁸ If any doubt remains, he tells his reader explicitly that "this [circular] movement of [concepts] . . . constitutes the nature of scientific method in general" (PhS 20).

Hegel's philosophy thus stands as a direct challenge to the claim of the viciousness of circular demonstration. What allows him to do this without falling into the commission of a naive fallacy is his complete reconception of the nature of demonstration which is appropriate to philosophy. The linear-geometric model of demonstration is set aside in favor of a circular-teleological method.²⁹ So far, then, is Hegel from starting with indubitable, immediately certain propositions which are taken as indemonstrable axioms, that, in fact, he asserts the necessity of commencing philosophic demonstration with propositions which are actually *false*! "Where knowledge by thought is our aim," Hegel writes, "we cannot begin with the truth, because the truth, when it forms the beginning, must rest on mere assertion" (SL §159 *Zusatz*). This insistence on beginning with what is false is repeated and emphasized – even flaunted! – in each of Hegel's major works, a circumstance which indicates that he is by no means seeking to conceal this seemingly devastating state of affairs, but on the contrary that he actually perceives it as a source of pride. To cite just one more instance of what we might call Hegel's principle of the "false start," a passage again taken from the "shorter" *Logic* where Hegel is particularly concerned with the question of the circularity of demonstration: "Why then, it may be asked, begin with the false and not at once with the true, [since the Hegelian philosophy is supposed to be the expression of absolute truth]? To which we answer that truth, to deserve the name, *must authenticate its own truth*; . . . the justification, or proof of it, can only result from the detailed treatment of thought [in its process of thinking]" (SL §83 *Zusatz*; and cf. §78 *Anmerkung*; PhS 22).

This thoroughly radical approach to demonstration is explained by Hegel's conviction that the original propositions of thought are immediate and hence incomplete – and, in this sense, false – and that truth requires an "authentication," or justification, or deduction, which can only occur as the result of our original thought-determinations exposing themselves as incomplete. Truth, in other words, arises only with the whole development of thought from its initially incomplete and, therefore, misleading convictions to its educated comprehension of its evolving categories and principles. Truth can only be a result. To start with the truth would be simply to assert a result without giving its justification, and this would have the status of a presupposition or dogmatic pronouncement.

This aspect of Hegel's theory of demonstration, which asks us to reappraise the relationship between truth and falsity, provides us with a ground for profitably comparing his notion of method with that of Descartes as regards philosophic method. Insofar as Descartes modelled his method after geometry, and sought a primitive axiom, an "Archimedean point," which would guarantee the truth of his conclusions (providing correct rules of inference were followed), Hegel must be seen as set against the Cartesian method.³⁰ Further, Descartes sets about the audacious project of ridding himself of all his false beliefs and opinions, so as to arrive at something which cannot be doubted. In this respect, too, Descartes is of an anti-Hegelian spirit; for as we have just remarked, error and falsehood play a crucially positive role in Hegel's theory of truth.³¹ But let us look a bit more closely at Descartes' method of doubt, for it is not so anti-Hegelian as it might seem at first blush.

Descartes sets about his search for certainty in an eminently Socratic way, travelling as he does about the world, "discovering at every turn [his] own ignorance" but persisting doggedly after a "knowledge of [him]self" in "the great book of the world."³² It is this search itself, which Descartes regards as a preliminary to science, which is in many ways so close to Hegel's notion of science proper. Philosophy, as Hegel says, is a "quest" (LL 70), and this quest is itself already science: "*the way to science is itself already science*" (PhS 56). We have noted that this quest is for Hegel precisely a "road of doubt." This is the positive significance of scepticism for Hegel, which he regards not as a doubting only for the sake of doubting – which is how Descartes defines ancient scepticism³³ – but as a *seeking*. Hegel approvingly quotes Sextus Empiricus's assertion that sceptics are neither "dogmatists [nor] . . . those who assert incomprehensibility," but are those who "still continue to seek; . . . for this reason the sceptics called themselves the seekers *ζητητικοί*, and their philosophy the seeking *ζητητική*."³⁴ The sceptics, of course, never arrive at a positive epistemological position which they can accept, and here Hegel is in sympathy with Descartes's desire to surpass scepticism. But the search itself is crucial, and so far is Hegel from looking for a primitive axiom which will put an end to the search, that, in fact, he views truth as resting implicitly (or potentially, or embryonically) just in the sorts of beliefs and opinions and convictions which Descartes wishes to discard. For "it is only out of . . . error [that] truth arises" (SL §274 *Zusatz*).

The peculiarly circular character of Hegel's conception of demonstration is made evident when we see that the initial proposi-

tions of his philosophy are not false in such a way that they must be discarded, but are instead the germ of the truth, and as such are self-transforming, self-developing concepts rather than pure falsehoods which are to be left behind. This, of course, is precisely Hegel's teleological conception of knowledge and truth. Hegel follows Aristotle's characterization of science as beginning with what is "better known to us" and working through to what is "better known in itself."³⁵ In this way, as Aristotle says, "the order of actual development [here, the Hegelian *Bildung* of thought] and the order of logical existence [the essence or 'end,' what a thing is in its maturity or truth] are always the *inverse* of each other."³⁶ What this amounts to, according to Hegel, is "that because that which forms the beginning is [initially] undeveloped, . . . it is not truly known in the beginning," but awaits the "whole compass" of its development for its *telos* to appear in its truth (LL 72). We must, again to use Aristotle's terminology, move from the "fact" to the "reasoned fact," from immediate and isolated determinations of thought to rationally comprehended determinations of thought – *to* and not *from* first principles.³⁷

The starting point of demonstration "must in the course of science be converted into a result", Hegel says (SL §17). But then, "in this manner philosophy exhibits the appearance of a *circle* which closes with itself, and has no beginning in the same way as the other sciences have" (SL §17). Hegel's notion of deduction or justification is thus a "bringing-forth" of the "germ" to its fruition. The starting point of Hegel's demonstration is not a "fixed basis," he says, but it is "recast" or "transformed" or "exalted" by thought in the course of its education by experience (v. SL §50 *Anmerkung*). This dialectical transformation of the abstract beginning into a concrete result shows that the process of philosophic demonstration becomes a circle which unites starting point and goal. The beginning is converted into a result, and the result, or end, is seen to have been present implicitly from the start. In this way progress is equally a return, a "retreat" or "retrogression" (*Rückgang, Rückwärtsgehen*) to the beginning, which is a grounding of the beginning by the result into which it has developed (LL 71). Knowledge is led back to its origin, which was originally immediate and incomplete but is now fulfilled.

With this concept of a circular path of development, where arrival at the end is at the same time a return to the origin, we have reached our first glimpse of Hegel's portrait of Absolute Knowledge. For Absolute Knowledge – philosophic consciousness which has arrived at its culminating insight into the essential unity of all things – is a *retrospective* or *recollective* appraisal of demonstration (a *Rück-blicken*

or *Nach-denken* or *Er-innerung*, as Hegel puts it). We must look back on the process of development in order to appraise its result: "the goal, Absolute Knowing, or spirit that knows itself as spirit, [arises with] . . . the recollection [*die Erinnerung*] of the [shapes of spirit] . . . as they accomplish the organization of their realm" (PhS 493). This retrospective cognition is the comprehended history of the course of development which arises only at the end of its logical and temporal unfolding.³⁸ This vision of the retrospective circle of knowledge is the source of Hegel's famous "owl of Minerva" passage in his *Philosophy of Right*: "When philosophy paints its grey in grey, then has a shape of life grown old. By philosophy's grey in grey it cannot be rejuvenated but only understood. The owl of Minerva spreads its wings only with the falling of the dusk" (PhR Preface, p. 13; and cf. HPh 2:52). Absolute Knowledge is possible only at the close of a historical progression, when dusk is falling on the life of spirit, since only then does that history appear as a whole, a completed circle, open for the first time to a recollective comprehension of its meaning.

This passage from the *Philosophy of Right* expresses Hegel's insistence that knowledge and truth are results, not something we begin with. But it is crucial not to be misled about the nature of the result: the result, for Hegel, is not a simple proposition which serves as the conclusion of a linear demonstration, but is itself the cognition of the whole process of development. Just as with the Platonic view that "seeking and learning are in fact nothing but recollection,"³⁹ where recollection is not a simple result, a final "grasping at a flash," but a "path of recollection,"⁴⁰ a process or quest, so too with Hegel. Hegel's theory of demonstration is set firmly against the view that knowledge and truth are wholly comprised in a conclusion, with the actual process or pathway of arriving at the conclusion being by comparison of little importance, something to be left behind or forgotten once we are in possession of the conclusion. No, "we must remark that a one-sided point of view is involved in apprehending the result of development merely as a result; it is [itself] a process . . ." (HPh 3:526). That is, philosophic knowledge is a recognition of the whole compass of the development of thought, for this self-movement and history of thought is alone the making-manifest or the realization of truth – nothing short of the whole circle is sufficient.

In the "owl of Minerva" passage, Hegel takes on the mantle of poet to express his vision of recollective knowledge, just as he does at the close of his *Phenomenology*, where he speaks of "the Calvary of absolute Spirit, . . . without which it would be lifeless and alone," and

then closes his text with a (somewhat altered) couplet from the Romantic poet Schiller (PhS 493).⁴¹ It seems appropriate, then, to cite a stanza from another poet, himself neither a Romantic nor an Absolute Idealist, but absorbed as was Hegel by the imagery of circularity. This is T. S. Eliot, and the stanza is from his *Little Gidding*, which may well serve as a poetic encapsulation of the spirit of Hegel's teleological circle.

We shall not cease from exploration,
And the end of all our exploring
Will be to arrive where we started
And know the place for the first time,
Through the unknown, remembered gate
When the last of earth left to discover
Is that which was the beginning;
At the source of the longest river
The voice of the hidden waterfall.⁴²

Eliot expresses here the Hegelian theme of the circular nature of our search for knowledge, describing the ultimate arrival at the end of our quest as a rediscovery of the beginning as a transformed origin, an origin given a new significance by the experience and knowledge gained on the path of the search. As Viellard Baron suggests, "*La réminiscence n'indique pas un retour mais un dépassement; . . . l'activité de la pensée dans la réminiscence est donc de dépasser l'existence immédiate*"⁴³ – recollection is a going-beyond, a transcendence and recasting of the initially immediate origin. The origin, or source, conceals an initially hidden anticipation of the ending, "the voice of the hidden waterfall," which for Hegel is the voice of Absolute Knowledge, emerging as philosophic recollection – the "remembered gate" – as the path of exploration reaches its close, circling back to encompass the now complete history of this exploration.

In our last two chapters we will have to examine very carefully just what this portrayal of Absolute Knowledge as a circle of recollection entails. Does Hegel mean to imply that this culminating *Erinnerung* occurs as the final consummation of history, as an apocalyptic "last day" of spirit where the final arc of the circle of development is being closed beyond hope of future cycles of history? Does Hegel's eschatological vision of a "close of time" mean that the "last of earth left to discover" is now being unearthed by the archaeology of Absolute Knowledge, with no further exploration possible, with nothing

left for history to accomplish? Or, on the contrary, is Hegel's point that Absolute Knowledge occurs episodically, at the close of every epoch of history, where the dusk of "a shape of life" will turn into the dawn of a new life as the cyclical, spiralling rhythm of spirit sets and rises in a continually regenerating path of historical evolution?

I will argue that the first alternative, where the recollective circle of Absolute Knowledge announces a final closure of history, is untenable, standing in conflict with the very principles of Hegel's metaphysics and epistemology which make possible his fundamental project of a grand synthesis of thought and being. But while I will seek to provide convincing grounds for adopting the second alternative, where history remains as an open-ended process of development, I will also argue that we must recognize a fundamental ambivalence on Hegel's part with regard to this issue. The solution to the dilemma of Hegel's eschatology is neither straightforward nor obvious, and calls for an act of philosophic choice on the part of the reader, since Hegel himself finally resisted choosing for us.

Chapter Six

THE QUESTION OF COMPLETION: HEGEL AND CHRISTIAN ESCHATOLOGY

*. . . Behold, I will make three know what shall be in
the last end . . . : for at the time appointed the end shall
be.*

Daniel 8:19

We have just seen that Hegel's new method of demonstration is meant to illustrate the dialectical and teleological development of thought evolving into progressively deeper and richer shapes. Further, we have emphasized throughout this work that this process of the development of thought is conceived of as the *Bildung* of human rationality in history, for thought reaches out to being, and being articulates and instantiates the dialectic of thought on the stage of human history. As Hegel writes in his *History of Philosophy*, "history is the process of mind itself, the [progressive] revelation of itself from its first . . . enshrouded consciousness, . . . in order that the absolute command of mind, 'know thyself,' may be fulfilled" (HPh 3:7).¹ We have now reached the point where we must explicitly ask the question of how we are to read this Delphic language of the "fulfillment" of knowledge. What is the "Absolute Knowledge" Hegel speaks of as the *telos* of the development of thought, and what consequences does this fulfillment have both for our view of history and for our conception of what it means to know? If history is "the process of mind itself," then it would seem that with the achievement of Absolute Knowledge, history would no longer progress. As Stephen Crites asks, "in the light of this quasi-eschatological claim, the question is not merely, 'what

will the future be?' but 'what sort of future is, in principle, possible?'"² And so too with knowledge: once we have fulfilled the *telos*, does knowledge no longer progress? If, as Quentin Lauer suggests,³ once consciousness has become "absolute, . . . there are no more inadequacies in [its] awareness, . . . no more hidden crannies of itself to reveal," what would this knowledge be like?

1. The Ambiguity

Hegel's theory of knowledge, and with it his philosophy of history, are governed throughout by an eschatological vision. For the teleological principle he regards as essential to a true appraisal of the essence of thought makes a consideration of the End indispensable to his anatomy of human knowledge and history. It is precisely the absence of the notion of a consummation of the End that Hegel takes as one of the fundamental failures of the German *Aufklärung*. In speaking of Fichte, for example, Hegel writes that his predecessor's "theory of knowledge regards the struggle of the ego with the object as that of a continuous, [unending] process" (HPh 3:501), a process which is "a constant progression . . . which never reaches any end" (HPh 3:492).⁴

It is the aim of Hegel's absolute idealist system to show how human knowledge can "wrest itself out of this progress to infinity, and free itself absolutely from limitation" (PhM §386 *Zusatz*), by "resolving the infinite progress into the End" (SL §242). Hegel's conviction that truth must be more than a mere "approximation," more than something relative to finite and subjective consciousness, leads him to posit a "final concord" (SL §24 *Zusatz*) of consciousness with the totality of its objects, a "consummation of the infinite End" of knowledge and of the world (SL §212 *Zusatz*). This is in keeping with the systematic aim of Hegel's method, which we saw in the last chapter to involve the idea that nothing short of the whole, or totality, of the determinations of thought can constitute truth. Hegel thus speaks of a "self-closure" of his system, a "*sich selbst zusammenschließend*" of knowledge or spirit (SL §242; and cf. PhS 483; PhM §379 *Zusatz*), where "spirit [has reached] . . . the completion of its work" or "concluded the movement in which it has shaped itself" (PhS 486, 490). In this same vein, Hegel is led to announce the "absolute end of history" (PhH 103), where spirit has fulfilled its eschatological design, the realization of its freedom and the attainment of its complete knowledge of itself.

There is no room for dispute that Hegel speaks of the "end of history" and the "conclusion" of the development of spirit in Absolute Knowledge. What is open to dispute is what Hegel means by this. What does Hegel mean when he speaks of "the end," "the completion," "the conclusion," "the consummation," "the fulfillment," of history and knowledge? There seem to be two basic alternatives; either the completion Hegel speaks of is absolute or it isn't. That is, either Hegel's eschatological vision is of an *absolute* End, where no further progress in history or knowledge is possible, or it is an *epochal* conception, where the completion he speaks of is the recurring fulfillment of successive historical epochs, leaving the future open to progress.

It is my feeling that an ample supply of passages in Hegel's texts may be found to support either of these basic alternatives, as well as many passages which can be read in either way. And I feel that this reflects a real ambivalence and ambiguity in Hegel's philosophy. We cannot explain away one interpretation or the other and be left with a single, clearly correct doctrine of the End. For the ambiguity represents an internal tension in Hegel's philosophy between two goals which he seems to find equally important but which stand in complete conflict with each other.

On the one hand, Hegel analyzes both knowledge and being as in their very essence dialectical and teleological processes of becoming. Becoming is the pulse of life, the vital principle of knowing and being, for the "satisfaction" of spirit is "that which brings on natural death" (PhH 74). This suggests that no absolute completion of knowledge or being would be possible without at once destroying their very essence – without literally tolling their death-bell. Lukács puts the dilemma very clearly, when he charges Hegel with attempting an "annulment of history."

But this annuls the whole scheme of history elaborated by [Hegel's philosophy]: the spirit which is supposed to make history and whose very essence is supposed to be the fact that it is the actual driving force, the motor of history, ends up by turning history into a mere simulacrum.⁵

On the other hand, Hegel presents his philosophical system as achieving an "absolute knowledge" and "absolute truth" which depends for its absoluteness on being a comprehension of the whole compass or totality of the *Gestalten* of spirit. This suggests that there *must* be an absolute completion of knowledge and being and history, a "self-

closure" of the circle of development, a final arrival at the End and result which is the truth of the whole. For if the future were open-ended as regards progress in knowledge and being, the whole would never be achieved, but would remain an unfulfilled ideal; and *absolute* knowledge, the comprehension of the whole, would seem to remain an unrealizable project. Stephen Crites expresses this dilemma (the converse of the dilemma Lukács addressed above) succinctly: "But if Hegel's Absolute is not absolute, the whole Hegelian view of Spirit and history falls to the ground."⁶

This tension in Hegel's philosophy has been prefigured throughout the course of this work. It was prefigured in our discussion of Hegel's theory of truth, which attempts to unify the temporal and the eternal, the secular and the sacred, the human and the divine; in our discussion of Hegel's notion of substance, which seeks to synthesize Heraclitian becoming with Spinozistic permanence; in our discussion of the Hegelian epistemology, which is both committed to the view of knowledge as a perpetual labor of development and to the proposition that the object of consciousness is not finally an Other to mind at all; in our discussion of Hegel's dialectic, which is both the perpetual opposition of all that is determinate and the resolution of this negativity; in our discussion of Hegel's teleology, where, on the one hand, we have the perpetual process of development, and, on the other, the constant presence and dominance of the End; and finally, in our anticipatory discussion of the recollective circle of Absolute Knowledge, where we noted the ambiguity between an apocalyptically closed circle and a continually regenerating spiral of development. The time has now arrived for us to address this tension head-on.

While I am convinced that a faithful interpretation of Hegel can only result in a confirmation of his ambivalence, still, I feel that preference should be given to the reading which emphasizes the epochal, dialectically open-ended pole of the ambivalence as against the absolutist pole. I say this because I feel that the reconstruction entailed by such a choice offers us the chance to revitalize the "magic charm" of Hegel's dialectic vision of history which his ambivalence places so much into question. This is desirable because once the dialectical principle of the Hegelian system is removed (as it unavoidably is under the absolutist reading where the strife of becoming is finally overcome), we have removed the very soul of Hegel's anatomy of spirit, effecting a sort of philosophic lobotomy. Further, I believe that only under such an interpretation can we make sense of Hegel's central project of a grand synthesis. For while the absolutist reading does, of course, yield a certain configuration of the grand syn-

thesis, where thought and being have arrived at a state of final repose, such a static configuration of spirit would be possible only at the expense of the very definition of each of its terms, since both thought and being are defined as having life only insofar as they are animated by the dialectical impulse of becoming. Finally, I also believe that in emphasizing this nonabsolutist side of Hegel's ambivalence, we need not sacrifice knowledge and truth to the chains of utter subjectivism and relativism that he sought so persistently to avoid. I feel, that is, that Hegel took a wrong turn, an unnecessary and self-defeating turn, when he came to suggest an absolute completion of history in an attempt to escape these chains. But this will have to be shown.

I wish to begin our analysis of the question of completion in Hegel's philosophy with a discussion of the specifically theological dimension of his eschatological vision. Despite the attempts of some commentators to view Hegel's Christian imagery – which is ever-present in his writings – as a purely mythological, symbolic, figurative covering over his basically secular and even atheistic philosophy, I believe that Hegel took his Christian heritage seriously, and sincerely viewed his philosophy as "the true theodicy, the justification of God" (PhH 457, and v. 15; cf. HPh 3:7, 546). We would be confounding the whole spirit of Hegel's philosophy if we were to read his claim that "the philosophic idea is the idea of God" (HPh 3:11) as somehow merely allegorical, or his equally uncompromising proposition that "religion can exist without philosophy, but philosophy cannot exist without religion" (PhRel 3:148) as only a mythological trapping, or worse, as simply an artificial concession to the church. As we saw in Chapter Two, this theological dimension is crucial to Hegel's anatomy of truth, and any attempt to reduce it to a disguised anthropomorphism would rob it of the trans-finite *Logos* which is essential to this anatomy. Hence Hegel's specifically Christian eschatology is central to his conception of the End or completion of knowledge and history.

Hegel's Christianity is quite idiosyncratic, however, and he does not simply take over the Christian vision of the "end of the world" and the creation of the New Jerusalem, but has an unorthodox *historical* interpretation of the eschatological End. As we will see, it is precisely because of this unorthodoxy that Hegel is not necessarily committed to the common Christian reading of an apocalyptic End – an absolute closure of history – but can also be read as proposing a nonabsolutist, epochal conception of the End.

A word of warning: we will find that Hegel's Christian eschatology serves more to underscore the conflict in his philosophy between an

absolutist and a nonabsolutist conception of completion than to resolve it. The present penultimate chapter will thus end in frustration and loss of way. Indeed, it will not be until well into our next and final chapter that we will be led to an attempted resolution of the dilemma of completion. This long path of disorientation and uncertainty is not a gratuitous prolonging of our search, however, but is necessary for exhibiting one of the basic contentions of my reading of Hegel, that is, that we look in vain for an unambiguous formulation of his eschatological vision, precisely because he is torn in two opposing directions by conflicting desiderata of his philosophy. The forthcoming discussion of the theological dimension of Hegel's eschatology will serve in this way as an initiation into the pathway of doubt which he left as the legacy of his inconclusive search for a resolution to the question of completion. Only after such an initiation will it be appropriate to turn, in Chapter Seven, to an analysis of several less directly theological passages in order to support my recommendation for a nonabsolutist reading of Hegel's eschatology.

2. The Book of Revelation

Christian eschatology is based on the biblical promise of salvation and redemption from suffering and despair, from the irrationality and injustice of the world. It is derived largely from the Book of Revelation, but also from many of the prophetic and apocalyptic visions of both the Old and New Testaments.⁷ The Book of Revelation itself, written around A.D. 96, was addressed to a Christian community in the throes of a brutal persecution by the Romans. It promised the annihilation of – the pouring of the “vials of wrath” on – the imperial cult of the Caesars, and the salvation and redemption of the faithful in a new heaven on earth, a New Jerusalem.

1. And I saw [St. John writes of his Revelation] a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea.

2. And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.

3. And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God.

4. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.

5. And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. . . . (Revelation 21:1-5)⁸

Thus there will come a *new world*, where "the former things are passed away," and "all things are made anew."⁹ This New Jerusalem will redeem man from ~~God's~~ curse – "and there shall be no more curse" (Rev. 22:3) – and will be an eternal kingdom: as Luke prophesies, "[God] shall reign over the house of Jacob forever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end" (Luke 2:33).¹⁰

It goes without saying that there have been many diverging interpretations of this eschatological vision.¹¹ Yet despite this wide divergence of interpretation, there seems to be substantial agreement among most Christian theologians that the return of Christ (at the apocalypse) signals the *End of history*¹² (however much they may differ as to whether this End occurs at the outset or the end of the messianic Millennium predicted in the Book of Revelation). Reinhold Niebuhr, for example, expresses this view very clearly when he suggests that history is but an "interim" for man, in which there is no hope for the fulfillment of the moral and religious ideal, but that this ideal will be fulfilled "beyond time,"¹³ "not within history itself," but at "the end of history."¹⁴ The End of history, Niebuhr continues, "is a point where that which exists ceases to be: it is *finis*"; "the ultimate vindication of God over history . . . [cannot be] reduced to a point in history."¹⁵

The notion that, as the Gospel of Matthew puts it, Christ's return will usher in "the end of the world" (24:3) – that "the field is the world . . . [and] the harvest is the end of the world" (13:38-39) – has thus generally been read to mean that redemption will be the announcement of the End of history, "beyond time" ~~and~~^{as} Niebuhr says. Karl Löwith eloquently summarizes this basic component of Christian eschatology in an article on "History and Christianity."

What really begins with the appearance of Jesus Christ is not a new epoch of secular history, called "Christian," but the beginning of an end. The Christian times are Christian only in so far as they are the last time. Because *the Kingdom of God . . . is not to be realized in a continuous process of historical development*, the eschatological history of salvation also cannot impart a new and progressive meaning to the history of the world, which is fulfilled by having reached its term. The "meaning" of the history of this world is fulfilled against

itself, because *the story of salvation*, as embodied in Jesus Christ, *redeems and dismantles, as it were, the hopeless history of the world.*¹⁶

It is from this basic tenet of Christian eschatology, that there is no historical hope for man but that the redemption and salvation of man will occur at the End of history, or "beyond history," that Hegel's vision of the consummation of the Christian *telos* departs. For Hegel, God's revelation is intrinsically historical. Hence, "the history of the world, . . . the process of development and realization of spirit, is the true theodicy, the justification of God *in history*" (PhH 457). To say that God is a manifest God, a revealed God, is for Hegel to say that He is manifest and revealed in the course of human history. As we noted in Chapter Two, any idea of a transhistorical revelation would be to remove God into a mythological "Beyond," a realm in which He literally would cease to be "actual" or "real."

3. Revelation and Reason

This rejection of displacing God into an unknowable "Beyond" means, according to Hegel's interpretation, that God is not inherently inaccessible to human reason. The prophet Isaiah's claim that "there is no searching God's understanding" (40:28) is belied, in Hegel's view, by God's revelation. This reading of revelation has been perhaps the most criticized aspect of Hegel's unorthodoxy. For it involves a transgression of the belief in the final inscrutability and unsearchability of God.

St. Paul writes that man should

judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts: and then shall every man have praise of God (I Corinthians 4:5).

But when Hegel says that "man must know God," he means that "the deepest things of the Godhead," God's innermost nature and purposes, are accessible to human reason (PhH 14). Even more strongly, God's revelation is *synonymous* with the discovery by human reason of His nature and purpose: "we must know and apprehend . . . [God's revelation] in reason; for it is the work of self-revealing reason and is the highest form of reason" (HPh 1:62; and v. PhM §564 & *Anmerkung*). Revelation is the manifestation of rationality, which is not discon-

tinuous with the *Bildung* of human thought in history, but its very expression. Since God's manifestation is history itself, His purpose is "hidden" only to the extent that man does not think that purpose through in a philosophic way – and, in this sense, God is the very opposite of an "unsearchable" God. As we saw in Chapter Two, it is a basic principle of Hegel's grand synthesis that human consciousness is not finally cut off from the divine *Logos*, but achieves a unity with it which is made actual in the unfolding of the historical destiny of thought and being.

I mentioned that this view of revelation is one of the most strenuously opposed aspects of Hegel's departure from Christian orthodoxy.¹⁷ Kierkegaard expresses the feelings of many theologians when he says that this reduction of revelation to rationality amounts to the "emasculatation" of Christianity.¹⁸ For Kierkegaard, there is an absolute barrier between faith and reason, and between the knowledge of God in his revelation to man and theoretical knowledge. There can be no "objective knowledge" of God – no rational comprehension of His redemptive purpose.¹⁹ God is "divinely elusive" and indeed "invisible" to reason by this view.²⁰ Reinhold Niebuhr echoes Kierkegaard's sentiments when he writes that "History is not rational. At least it does not conform to the systems of rational coherence which men construct periodically to comprehend its meaning. . . . History can be meaningful . . . only in terms of a faith . . . [in God] which transcends human understanding."²¹ Richard Kroner also speaks for the majority when he alludes to "the grave danger" of the Hegelian "dialectical reconciliation of reason and revelation," on the grounds that "it conjures up the immanent danger of a misapprehension of the Word of God" and "seems to imply the transference of the center of gravity from God to man." From this decentering of God, Kroner suggests, it is but a step to a Godless world.²² And Karl Barth writes that the Hegelian "*Identifizierung Gottes mit der dialektischen Methode*" – that is, the reduction of "*Vernunft und Offenbarung*" – amounts to a reduction of theology to anthropology: "*Die Selbstbewegung der Wahrheit müßte von der Selbstbewegung des Menschen abgehoben sein – [as opposed to Hegel's explicit equation of them] – um als Selbstbewegung Gottes gegenüberstehen würde.*" According to Barth, the true theology must leave God's revelation "incomprehensible" and salvation a "mystery" if God is to remain free and if the idea of divine Grace is to be possible.²³

It is not our place here to adjudicate between the merits of Hegel's view of revelation and that of thinkers like Kierkegaard, Niebuhr, Kroner, or Barth. Hegel's is surely the less orthodox view, and yet it

is no less attuned to the message of Christian eschatology. I would like to look briefly at four main themes of this message – the meaning of suffering and our deliverance from suffering, the nature of the Curse, the idea of the “tabernacle of God,” and finally, the apocalyptic vision of a “new world” – to give us a feel for the character of Hegel's Christian eschatology, and to lead in to our discussion of the question of the ambiguous status of the completion of history.

4. Hegel's Christian Eschatology and the Apocalyptic Vision of a “New World”

a. Suffering

The idea that with the New Jerusalem “God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes,” delivering man from his “sorrow” and “crying” and “pain” (Rev. 21:4), can be seen as the central theme of Hegel's analysis of the “unhappy consciousness” (*unglückliches Bewußtsein*).²⁴ For Hegel, the experience *par excellence* of the unhappy consciousness is religious despair. It is the sense of separation from and yearning for God, a “quenchless unsatisfied thirst after God,” an “endless longing” (SXty 291, 200) and “infinite grief” (F&K 190; PhS 456) which is due precisely to the sense that God is essentially incomprehensible, an “incognizable God,” and hence unreachably beyond our fathoming. This is the ultimate alienation and estrangement of man, his infinite distance from God, his most desolating loss, his terrifying anxiety that *God is dead* (see PhS 455). When God is felt to be incomprehensible, men experience the irrationality of their existence, since they are cut off from any chance of comprehending the Absolute purpose and meaning and value of their world.

Hegel argues that it is only out of this sense of loss and grief that man can attain his authentic nature, which is a consciousness of the unity of the human and divine: “The grief and longing of the unhappy self-consciousness . . . permeates [all the shapes of consciousness], and is the . . . common birthpang of [the] emergence of spirit [which is made whole and healed from its wounds]” (PhS 456f). Only from the “harsh consciousness of loss,” the “infinite grief” of the experience of “the abyss of nothingness” into which we are thrown when we feel the “Godforsakenness” of the world that follows from the inaccessibility of God to our understanding, can the highest union emerge (F&K 190,

191). For without this "poetry of Protestant grief," our existence would fall into "the prose of satisfaction with the finite and of good conscience about it" (F&K 61). That is, we would be content with and complacent about the Godless world, with the world of particularity and finitude, if we never experienced the utter pain and grief of loss that comes with our yearning for God. Hegel believes that out of this grief – and only out of this grief – man can rise to the consciousness of his unity with God, by seeing that God in his revelation is rational, and that history, which man makes, is always equally the manifestation of the divine. In this sense, man is not cut off from God's revelation but is rather the agent by which this revelation is made actual, a co-creator of the rational fabric of world history.

Of course, it remains open to interpretation whether this vision of man's co-implication in the creation of world history which emerges out of the unhappy consciousness is to be seen as a *last rite* of salvation – a liberation from suffering which occurs at the final End of time and by which man can henceforth recollectively discover his role in history from the vantage-point of a *post-historical* redemption – or whether, on the contrary, the liberation from despair is a perpetually recurring event of human existence. Under the first interpretation, which is in keeping with the apocalyptic reading of Hegel's eschatology, despair will be overcome once and for all at the final close of history, since the condition for the possibility of despair, man's being-in-the-world of time, is itself overcome. Under the second interpretation, salvation from the despair of estrangement would come at the culmination of each successive epoch of history, when a culture has risen to the perspective from which it can comprehend the purpose of its destiny as more than an irrational reeling through time, but as an expression of Absolute Spirit in its progressive historical evolution. Certainly, such an epochal overcoming of alienation necessarily implies that despair is not something which will be "resolved" once and for all, but is rather a perpetually regenerating fate of mankind, as each new epoch strives with its own conflicts and discords, in its own test of the spirit. But such a view seems to me to be the logical consequence of Hegel's definition of spirit as having life only insofar as it transmutes itself in the crucible of negativity and strife. Which of these two interpretations we choose will depend, then, on whether we believe Hegel should be willing to see spirit reaching a completion in which it finally overcomes its own definition, its inherent negativity, and hence becomes something fundamentally other than itself, being "redeemed" and "saved" from its own nature.

b. The Curse

A second aspect of Christian eschatology which Hegel's philosophical theology is attuned to despite its unorthodoxy is the idea that in the New Jerusalem, "there shall be no more curse" (Rev. 22:3). We have mentioned in Chapter Three that Hegel regards the Curse which follows upon the Fall of man as expressing a necessary condition for man to rise out of his merely "natural" condition to authenticity. The Curse demands that man toil with his inner conflict between good and evil, which Hegel views as an essential labor for the *Bildung* of the human spirit coming to know itself. Innocence is like "the mere being of a stone, not even that of a child" (PhS 282), a nonhuman indifference to moral conflict. The overcoming of the Curse which is promised in Christian eschatology represents not a return to innocence, but a more profound harmony in which man has recognized his unity with God, in the sense of his responsibility to shun the "prose of satisfaction with the finite," and his role in transforming his inner nature and his outer existence into images of the divine. The Curse, then, is really a disguised blessing, initiating the path of labor by which man ascends to his authentic nature.

As with the question of how to interpret the deliverance from suffering, however, we must recognize the ambiguous character of Hegel's portrayal of the Curse. For it is not at all obvious whether the mandate of the Curse, that man must labor and toil to rise to his authentic nature, is meant to lead to a *final* destiny or rather is conceived as an *unending* destiny. Does man achieve authenticity only at the close of history, as a sort of posthistorical consolation or reward, or is human authenticity perpetually being created and recreated, in a rhythm of discovery and loss and subsequent recovery? For now, the choice remains open, the ambiguity unresolved.

c. The "Tabernacle of God"

A third aspect of the eschatological prophecy is that of the "tabernacle of God."

And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride for her husband.

And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God (Rev. 21:2-3).

While we have noted the ambiguity attending Hegel's presentation of the themes of suffering and the Curse, his position with regard to the tabernacle of God seems much more straightforward: the tabernacle of God is the community of the Church *on earth and in history*. We have already cited (in Chapter Two) Hegel's belief that "one may have all sorts of ideas about the Kingdom of God; but it is always a realm of spirit to be realized and brought about in man" (PhH 20). Hegel follows Christ's saying that "the kingdom of God is in the midst of you" (Luke 17:21).²⁵ As he writes in his *Spirit of Christianity*, "What Jesus calls the 'Kingdom of God' is the living harmony of men; . . . it is the development of the divine among men" (SXty 277; v. 267f; PhS 473). And in his *History of Philosophy* Hegel says that "the reconciliation of God with Himself is accomplished in the world, and not as a heavenly kingdom that is beyond" (HPh 3:21). The human community is the witness to God, being His manifestation in the world. Hence, the true elevation of man to a unity with God takes place in history, and specifically, according to Hegel, in the Christian epoch in which man sees his unity with God through the revelation of God in His Son, who is the living symbol of the reconciliation of the human and divine natures.

Here we see the seeds of a somewhat different ambiguity from what we have been talking about so far: the ambiguity has been displaced from a question of the fate of history itself – whether Hegel is proposing a posthistorical destiny of man or a continually open-ended course of development – to the question of whether he is suggesting that the Christian epoch will be the last era of history, not beyond history, but nevertheless beyond the need for further historical evolution. We will see that both of these ambiguities – one is tempted to borrow a phrase from Hegel out of its context, and speak of an "ambiguous ambiguity"!²⁶ – are very real in Hegel's eschatology, and often intertwine to add confusion to confusion.

d. The "New World"

What, finally, are we to say of the Hegelian interpretation of the apocalyptic vision of a *new world*, where "former things are passed away" and God will "make all things new" (Rev. 21:4–5)? This question brings us to the crux of the issue of completion in Hegel's theological eschatology. From what we have just seen about Hegel's interpretation of the tabernacle of God, it seems that the fulfillment of the Christian *Logos* could not possibly take place "beyond time" or "outside of history." The Christian *eschaton*, the "new world" of prophecy, must

itself be subject to the dialectic of history, the dialectic of perpetual becoming. And yet we have also seen, with regard to Hegel's appropriation of the Christian themes of suffering and the Curse, that there is some question about whether this fulfillment will be beyond history. So too, there is a real question as to whether Hegel's frequent reference to the emergence of a "new world" is meant to announce the superseding of time and history. François Châtelet, for one, says that Hegel takes over "*l'eschatologie chrétienne*, . . . [with its assertion of the] *fin de l'Histoire* . . . [and the] *abolition du temps*" lock, stock and barrel.²⁷

In fact, we will see in Chapter Seven that the majority of commentators read Hegel's eschatology in this absolutist way, as entailing the "abolition of time" so that the "new world" of Christian prophecy is to be a post-historical world. It is this absolutist interpretation of Hegel's eschatology which I am most opposed to, and against which I wish to propose the alternative of an open-ended, epochal reading of history. We will return to look more carefully at this absolutist reading in just a moment, when we turn to a discussion of Hegel's own talk of an "annulment" or "annihilation" (*Tilgung*) of time (see section 5). But first I would like us to look at a quite different interpretation, one offered by Karl Löwith in his splendid intellectual history of nineteenth-century thought, *From Hegel to Nietzsche*. Löwith's interpretation differs from Châtelet's in two ways – first, it is an *epochal* rather than an absolutist reading of the Christian End; and second, it corresponds to the ambiguity which we saw to arise out of Hegel's conception of the tabernacle of God, the ambiguity over the status of Christianity as the last era of history (rather than the qualitatively different ambiguity which arose out of the question of the deliverance from suffering and the nature of the Curse, over the fate of history itself).

Löwith writes that "Hegel displaces the Christian expectation of the end of the world of time into the course of the world process" and views his own age as the "definitive conclusion" and "consummation" of this Christian expectation.²⁸ But this consummation is not to be read in the same way as Löwith characterizes orthodox Christian eschatology, as a "redemption and dismantling of the hopeless history of the world" (see p. 120 above). For Hegel displaces this posthistorical redemption into the course of world history. This means, according to Löwith, that there is no End of historical time *per se*, and when Hegel speaks of the completion of history he is really intending to refer to "the end of the history of the Christian *logos*."²⁹ This implies that Hegel views Christianity as something to be superseded itself, which is indeed how Löwith interprets Hegel's talk of "the present age" (early

1800s] being the "opening of a new era."³⁰ Löwith may be referring to the close of Hegel's *History of Philosophy*, where he says that "a new epoch has arisen in the world" (HPh 3:551). We will discuss this crucial passage – along with other passages in which Hegel speaks explicitly of a "new world" – at more length in Chapter Seven, but should point out here that it seems to suggest, against Löwith's interpretation, that the "new epoch" is itself the age of Christianity in its highest form.³¹ For Hegel speaks of the "World-spirit at last succeeding in stripping off from itself all alien objective existence, and apprehending itself at last as absolute spirit," and of "the strife of the finite self-consciousness [man] with the absolute self-consciousness [God], which last seemed to the other to lie outside itself, now com[ing] to an end" (HPh 3:551) – language which is too close to Hegel's analysis of the unhappy consciousness, whose overcoming is to usher in a reconciliation of man with the Christian God, to read as a superseding or going beyond Christianity.

Hegel views the fulfillment of the Christian *Logos* as the "perfection of spirit" (PhS 413), in which the human spirit gains "liberation" and "reconciliation" from alienation (HPh 2:2, 3, 6). And he calls this a "final concord" of man with himself, with his world, and with God (SL §24 *Zusatz*). To suggest, however, as Löwith does, that Hegel regards this consummation of the Christian spirit as merely an epoch which, in gaining its fulfillment, is overcome and points to "the opening of a new era" which will displace the Christian *Logos*, is hard to accept. If, as Löwith says, Hegel really viewed his own age and culture as the "end of the history of the Christian *logos*," where "a great turning [away from] and break with Christianity" would be made, "thus opening a new [post-Christian] era,"³² then I am perplexed as to how we are to understand Hegel's recurring references to Christianity as the "perfection of spirit" and the revelation of absolute truth. It is hard to envision a historical progress no longer guided by the spirit of Christianity which would not be a decline of knowledge and a decay of truth – or how could history progress *beyond* perfection and the Absolute?

Löwith's interpretation of Hegelian eschatology is certainly a tempting one, at least for someone like myself who is convinced that only under an epochal reading of Hegel's language of completion can we salvage the metaphysics of becoming which makes his anatomy of spirit intelligible. In fact, I do accept Löwith's interpretation, with this all-important proviso: Löwith seems to arrive at his interpretation too abruptly, without acknowledging just how much it stands in conflict

with a great deal of evidence which suggests that Hegel never intended to portray Christianity as just one more epoch of *Weltgeschichte*, destined to be overcome like all other epochs. Löwith's is a way of reading Hegel with which Hegel would have been quite uncomfortable, because of that side of him which felt constrained to posit a radical End of history, a fact that Löwith does not come to grips with. If we are to accept Löwith's reading, as I believe we should, it is important to explicitly recognize that it is a reading which stands in fundamental tension with the other (apocalyptic) side of Hegel's ambivalence, a side which in fact often got the better of him in his directly theological musings on history. Hegel fell under the spell of the Christian description of the ultimacy of its own *Logos*, and as a result he compromised his Heraclitian metaphysics, against all of his own principles. If we finally wish to accept an epochal reading such as Löwith's, we must correct it by seeing how it is in fact a rereading and reconstruction of Hegel's eschatology, which is necessary to recover the integrity of the Hegelian dialectic from the spell of the radical End which crippled it.

5. The Ambiguity Deepens

But let us not leap too quickly to this reconstruction, which will be the work of Chapter Seven. We have yet to take up Châtelet's suggestion that Hegel should be read literally when he speaks of the "new world," the age of the fulfillment of the Christian *Logos*, as the End of time and history. Hegel does in fact speak of the "annulment" or "annihilation" (*die Tilgung*) of time, and in order to assess the merits of the literalist interpretation of Hegel's Christian eschatology we must understand what he means by this "*Tilgung*."³³ The crucial passage is in the concluding pages of the *Phenomenology*, where Hegel is describing Absolute Knowledge in terms of the complete overcoming of the antithesis of knowledge and its objects (its world).

Time is the *Begriff* itself that is there [*daß da ist*].³⁴ . . . For this reason, spirit necessarily appears in time, and it appears in time just so long as it has not grasped its pure *Begriff*, i.e., has not annulled time [*nicht die Zeit tilgt*]. [Time] is the *outer* [shape of the *Begriff*] . . . ; when [the *Begriff* is truly comprehended], it sets aside its time-form [*hebt er seine Zeitform auf*]. . . Time, therefore, appears as the destiny and necessity of spirit that is not yet complete within itself . . . (PhS 487).

Time is the "destiny and necessity of spirit" to unfold its potentiality into actuality, and hence "spirit necessarily appears in time." But time is the *outer* form of the *Begriff*, the externalization (*die Entäußerung*) of thought into the world and history, and when this external unfolding of spirit "has completed itself" and "reached its consummation" (PhS 488), the *Begriff* (thought, knowledge, truth in general) "sets aside its time-form."

Perhaps the most straightforward way of reading this is to say with Châtelet and the "literalists" that with the attainment of Absolute Knowledge, or, in the context of Hegel's theology, with the achievement of the Christian *Logos*, time simply comes to an end. This would be in keeping with the apocalyptic interpretation of Hegel's eschatology, where the "new world" is to occur as a redemption beyond history. Hence Lukács says that the annulment of time "amounts to the self-annulment of history,"³⁵ and Dieter Jähnig charges that "*die Aufopferung menschlicher Gegenwart* [through the *Tilgung* of time] *auf dem Altar des Endzwecks* [Hegel's Absolute Knowledge] *ihren Grund in einer Beseitigung wirklicher Geschichte hat*."³⁶ But I would suggest that there is another way of reading this passage, corresponding to the nonabsolutist pole of Hegel's ambivalence, in which the "annulment of time" does not refer to a final End of time. By this interpretation, the "annulment of time" refers to the eternal form of concepts, what Hegel calls the "inward" (*innerlich*) form of thought as opposed to its "outer" or "external" (*äußerlich*) form. This inward form of thought is precisely the *Er-innerung* in which past shapes of "outer" historical existence become grasped as *comprehended* history. In this sense, when knowledge has (epochally) overcome the antithesis between its thought and its objects, its concepts become comprehended in their eternal significance.³⁷ In Chapter Two we saw that truth has both a temporal, historically developing form and an eternal, atemporal form for Hegel. Both are essential to truth, for truth is intrinsically dual-natured, existentially determined and hence temporal in its manifestation, and yet also transcendent of this historical manifestation.³⁸

In line with this idea, perhaps Hegel means to say that the Christian era is eternal not in the sense of being "beyond history" or at "the end of time," but in the sense of the "timelessness" of its truth: the *Begriff* or *Logos* of Christianity does not "lose itself" or become undermined in time. Yet this truth still requires manifestation, and hence a temporal existence. Christianity is the End or *telos* of human history in the sense that it expresses the ultimate purpose and meaning of spirit, but this too must be subject to the world of time, the world of

change: this purpose and meaning must be worked out and evolved in history.

This interpretation has all the marks of Hegel's infamous synthetic principle of the unity of opposites: the Christian era is both eternal and temporal, absolute and changing. Interestingly, it also bears striking resemblance to one common interpretation of Marx's eschatology. When Marx describes the approaching communist revolution as an event which will bring about the total "supersession [*Aufhebung*] of self-estrangement," and as the ultimate "resolution of the conflict" inherent in history, "the solution of the riddle of history"³⁹ – he is usually read in such a way that he is not suggesting that history will come to an End, that communist society will somehow be "beyond history."⁴⁰ Although there will be no more class conflict, which Marx and Engels regard as the moving force of all previous history, the communist world will continue to evolve, not *beyond* communism, to be sure, but still in such a way that will give full place to human creativity and development. If Marx is able to speak of a "resolution" of history which still allows for historical development, why shouldn't we permit Hegel to do the same?

Now I think this last point is a perfectly valid one – that Marx and Hegel do in fact face analogous situations with regard to their eschatological visions, and that the two should be judged in a similar way. I confess for my own part, however, that I am not entirely comfortable with this interpretation, where we must envision an ultimate "solution to the riddle of history" which itself will not be overcome and which nevertheless is compatible with historical development. It is not that I cannot imagine historical change occurring under an essentially unchanging guiding *Logos*. There has certainly been tremendous historical change in the common era, since the beginning of Christianity, and I would be willing to accept (at least for the sake of argument) that the essential truth of Christianity has remained unchanged. Rather, it is that this interpretation just does not seem to accord with Hegel's central principle that the consummation of one shape of spirit necessarily "signals the death of that shape," "the rejection of that stage and its transition to a higher" (PhR §243). This interpretation would allow for historical change, but not for *fundamental* change, not for the sort of change which is necessary for the evolution from one historical epoch to another. And the most straightforward way to read Hegel's dialectic is in terms of a commitment to fundamental change. Time itself is for Hegel out-and-out "negativity," the perpetual process of the "dissolution of all existence," the subsequent "transcendence of that existence," and the "production of a new, renovated, fresh life" (PhH 77,

78, 73). If the fulfillment of the Christian *Logos* is in fact meant to be a final, unalterable state of affairs, clearly it must somehow escape this intrinsic "negativity" of time, and this would seem to require that it take place beyond history, the theater of time.

The ambiguity and ambivalence in Hegel's theory of completion is not superseded in his Christian eschatology. For (1) if Châtelet is right that Hegel's Christian eschatology announces the "*abolition du temps*," then he seems equally correct in saying that we can make no sense out of the Hegelian ontology and metaphysics: "*l'esprit, qui est devenir* [by Hegel's own definition], *ne saurait être supprimé* [without violating its very definition]. [But then] *l'humanité* [necessarily] *continuera de devenir; mais, au sein de l'État mondial, elle n'évoluera plus, en ce sens qu'elle ne créera plus rien de nouveau. . . . Ce que sera une telle existence, il est également impossible de l'imaginer*."⁴¹ Whether or not this is impossible to imagine, it does not seem possible to reconcile with Hegel's ontology: spirit is a progressive becoming, a perpetual development in its very essence, so that a nontemporal, suprahistorical spirit would simply be a contradiction in terms.⁴²

But (2) if the "new world" is not to be the End of history and time, then it seems impossible to see how it could persevere without progress, and hence without alteration. And if alteration or development is to be allowed, then we must ask what sense it makes to speak of the Christian *eschaton* as the revelation of *absolute* truth. The notion of development relativizes every particular stage within the development, and unless we are willing to speak on of "absolute" truth which is relative to the course of development up to the present – i.e., a "relative absolute" – then the idea of an *eternal* "new world" in history seems to slip out of our grasp.⁴³

We have reached an impasse as to how we are to read Hegel's eschatology, and we need to seek further to find the way to turn, towards the absolutist or the nonabsolutist alternative. A good place to begin our search is with a closer look at Hegel's conception of the "new world" in some of the less directly theological passages of his speculations about the nature of history, metaphysics, and scientific knowledge. As we turn to these passages in our last chapter, I will argue that while they do not completely resolve our impasse, they do guide us in the direction of the nonabsolutist reading of Hegel's eschatology.

Chapter Seven

THE QUESTION OF COMPLETION: HEGEL'S PHILOSOPHIC ESCHATOLOGY

You yourself, honored teacher, intimated orally to me one day that you were entirely convinced of the necessity of new progress and new forms of the universal Spirit, . . . without, however, being able to give me any more precise account of these forms. . . . However, this conviction finds itself in flat contradiction with your systematic teachings, which, far from demanding such a progress of the world Spirit, on the contrary definitely exclude it.

Letter to Hegel from Christian Hermann Weisse,
July 11, 1829

We have determined to seek our point of orientation in the confusing terrain of Hegel's ambiguous eschatology in his conception of the "new world." In the first two sections of this chapter we will look at four crucial passages, three from the *Phenomenology* and one from the *History of Philosophy*. In three of the passages Hegel speaks of his present age as the ushering-in of a new world, and in the fourth he speaks of the "Calvary" or "Golgotha" (*die Schädelstätte*) of absolute spirit. The "Calvary" passage, along with two of the "new world" passages, reveal under analysis Hegel's fundamental ambiguity as regards the question of completion. But I will argue that they also show – particularly when read with the third "new world" passage, from the Preface to the *Phenomenology* – that one side of the ambiguity has stronger claims than the other, if consistency with the principles of Hegel's dialectic is to be taken as the criterion for judging. This is the side which rejects

any radical, final End to time and history, any final resolution to knowledge, truth, being, or history, beyond which no progress can be made. I will not argue, however, that the Hegelian ambiguity is only superficial, for the other side, that there is a definite completion of the dialectic, also has support within Hegel's system.¹ As I have suggested all along, there is a real and unresolved ambivalence in Hegel's philosophy as regards the question of completion, which has its roots in opposing and finally unreconcilable desiderata of his view of the nature of knowledge and being, truth and history.²

1. The "New World" Revisited

Let us look at the companion passages from the conclusions to the *Phenomenology* and the *History of Philosophy* where Hegel speaks of the "new world." In both cases, the context is Hegel's discussion of the question of the completion of knowledge and history. First, in the closing pages of the *Phenomenology*, Hegel leads up to the "new world" passage by saying that Absolute Knowledge involves "the reconciliation of consciousness [of the world] with self-consciousness," and that with this "unification . . . [we have reached] the close of the series of the shapes of spirit," and the "completion of the work [of spirit]" (PhS 482f, 486). The attainment of Absolute Knowledge is thus the actual fulfillment of Hegel's long-pursued goal of a grand synthesis of thought and being. He then speaks of the "*Tilgung* of time," and goes on to say that with Absolute Knowledge "spirit has completed itself in itself, . . . completed itself as world-spirit," and "reached its consummation; . . . in this [absolute] knowing, then, spirit has concluded the movement in which it has shaped itself" (PhS 488, 490). Following this evidently apocalyptic language of completion, Hegel now turns to speak of the "new world."

The becoming . . . [or] history . . . [of spirit] presents a slow-moving succession of spirits, a gallery of images, each of which, endowed with all the riches of spirit, moves thus slowly just because the self has to penetrate and digest this entire wealth of its substance. As its fulfillment consists in perfectly knowing what it is, in knowing its substance [i.e., the history of spirit's self-externalization in the world], this [absolute] knowing is its withdrawal into itself in which it abandons its outer existence and gives its existential shape over to recollection. Thus absorbed in itself, it is sunk in the night of its self-consciousness; but in that night its vanished outer existence is

preserved, and this transformed existence – the former one, but now reborn of the spirit's knowledge – is the *new existence, a new world and a new shape of spirit* (PhS 492).

Before discussing this difficult passage, let us cite the parallel passage from the *History of Philosophy* as well, where Hegel elaborates on the "new world," or what he calls there the "new epoch." The passage is at the end of the last section of the *History of Philosophy*, which Hegel calls the "Final Result."

To know opposition in unity, and unity in opposition – this is absolute knowledge; and science is the knowledge of this unity in its whole development. . . .

This [absolute knowledge] is then the demand of all time and of philosophy. *A new epoch has arisen in the world.* It would appear as if the world-spirit has at last succeeded in stripping off from itself all alien objective existence, and apprehending itself at last as absolute spirit. . . . The strife of the finite self-consciousness [man] with the absolute self-consciousness [God], which last seemed to the other to lie outside of itself, *now comes to an end.* . . .

This is the whole history of the world in general up to the present time, and the history of philosophy in particular, the sole work of which is to depict this strife. Now, indeed, it seems to have reached its goal, when this absolute self-consciousness, which it had the work of representing, has ceased to be alien, and when spirit accordingly is realized as spirit (HPh 3:551f).

In the *Phenomenology* passage, Hegel presents his vision of Absolute Knowledge as the "fulfillment" of the historical becoming of spirit, in which the self has a "perfect knowledge" of that history. This knowledge is recollective, purely theoretical and no longer a *praxis* in the world: it is a "withdrawal into itself in which it abandons its outer existence," an "absorption into itself, sunk in the night of its self-consciousness." But this recollective project, in which Absolute Knowledge perfectly "penetrates and digests" the history of the shapes or images of spirit, results in a "transformed existence" of spirit. Our knowledge of the past is the rebirth of spirit, a "new existence, a new world, and a new shape of spirit."

This passage may be read in two ways, reflecting the fundamental ambiguity of Hegel's vision of completion. It may mean simply that the *past* is transformed and appears in a new light – as a new world – when it is penetrated by Absolute Knowledge. If so, then Absolute

Hegel's language at the close of the *Phenomenology* be any less ambiguous than it is when he speaks of the "new world"? However much we may scrutinize these passages for an unambiguous statement of Hegel's intentions, we seek in vain for anything remotely resembling Fichte's "report, clear as the sun," which Fichte felt constrained to write to avoid any misunderstanding or confusion on the part of his dull-witted readers.⁹

2. Evidence for the Epochal Reading of Hegel's Eschatology: Placing the "New World" in Context

Having set the stage for our discussion of the ambivalence and ambiguity which attends Hegel's conception of the question of completion, I would like to turn to my argument that one side of ambiguity – the side which does not assert an absolute End of history, but which is epochal and open-ended – has stronger claims than the other to be adopted. I will begin by seeking to tip the balance of the ambiguity in the "new epoch" passage of the *History of Philosophy*, by arguing that the context in which this passage occurs should lead us to adopt the nonabsolutist version of completion. I will then turn to the third of the "new world" passages I referred to at the beginning of this chapter, the passage from the Preface to the *Phenomenology*, and argue that this illuminates the difficult "new world" passage at the conclusion of the *Phenomenology* in such a way that we should again adopt the nonabsolutist side of Hegel's ambivalent eschatology. Finally, in section 3 I will turn to some of the stronger assertions in Hegel's texts on both sides of the ambiguity of the question of completion, and try to show that while there is sufficient evidence for reading Hegel's position in either the absolutist or nonabsolutist sense of completion, the nonabsolutist version is to be preferred.

The whole tone of the concluding section of the *History of Philosophy*, the "Final Result" section, is one of taking stock of where we have arrived so as to look to the future. After the passage about the "new epoch" where Hegel says of the history of the world and the history of philosophy that "now, indeed, it seems to have reached its goal," he goes on to say that "this, then, is the standpoint of the present day, and the series of spiritual forms is with it *for the present concluded*" (HPh 3:552). This seems to give very strong support to the nonabsolutist interpretation of Hegel's eschatology, where history is to have a future progression. In this passage, at least, the completion of the development of spirit is epochal, not absolute, and the "whole develop-

ment" of spirit which Hegel refers to shortly before this sentence would seem to mean the whole development *up to now*, rather than a radically closed whole, that is, rather than the closure of history itself.

Further, in the penultimate paragraph of the *History of Philosophy*, just before thanking his students for attending his lectures, Hegel exhorts his students to "give ear to the urgency [of spirit] – when the mole that is within forces its way on, we have to make it a reality" (HPh 3:553). Hegel indeed speaks of the "summons" of the spirit "to bring it forth from its natural condition, . . . its lifeless seclusion, into the light of day" (HPh 3:553). This sense of urgency and this summons would seem inappropriate if the "new epoch" were to be "beyond history."

Finally, the concluding section of the *History of Philosophy* is interspersed with passages which reaffirm Hegel's Heraclitian metaphysics, with its emphasis on the nature of spirit as a perpetual becoming: "[Spirit] goes ever on and on, because spirit is progress alone. Spirit often seems to have forgotten and lost itself, but inwardly opposed to itself, it is inwardly working ever forward" (HPh 3:546f); "[The] eternal life [of spirit] consists in the very process of continually producing the opposition [of subject and object, thought and being, self and world] and continually reconciling it" (HPh 3:551). In the light of such passages, I would argue that when Hegel speaks of the "consummation" or "completion" or "coming to an end" or "reaching the goal" of spirit, that such pronouncements should be read as the fulfillment of the *telos* of a historical epoch, not of history or knowledge entire – a fulfillment which will give place to a new epoch, a new production and work of spirit.

Returning now to the *Phenomenology*, the "new world" passage which we have seen to yield diverging possible interpretations depending on how we understand Hegel's talk of the "completion" and "conclusion" of the work and self-development of spirit, finds its key, I believe, in a passage from the Preface in which Hegel also speaks of the "new world." The Preface, we should recall, was written immediately after the body of the *Phenomenology* was completed, and it seems quite proper to assume that Hegel had the concluding passage of his work in mind when he returned, in his Preface, to the theme of the "new world."

It is not difficult to see that ours is a birth-time and a period of transition to a new era. Spirit has broken with the world it has hitherto inhabited and imagined, and is of a mind to submerge it in the past, and in the labor of its own transformation. Spirit is indeed

never at rest but always engaged in moving forward. . . . The vague forboding [which our age feels] of something unknown . . . [is] the herald of approaching change.

. . . But this *new world* is no more a complete actuality than is a newborn child; it is essential to bear this in mind. It comes on the scene for the first time in its immediacy . . . (PhS 6f).

This passage is frankly and straightforwardly anticipatory, a looking-forward to a new era of history. The new world is explicitly portrayed as in its birth-time, as opposed to being the fulfillment and conclusion of a past epoch. There is again the reaffirmation of Hegel's Heraclitian metaphysics, the idea that "spirit is indeed never at rest but always engaged in moving forward." And finally, there is an illuminating echoing of some of the more obscure language of the "new world" passage at the close of the *Phenomenology*.

The concluding "new world" passage speaks of spirit becoming "sunk in the night of its self-consciousness" (*in der Nacht seines Selbstbewußtseins versunken* [Phän 590]), and of its "outer existence" becoming a "transformed existence" (*aufgehobene Dasein*), "reborn" from this submersion. Similarly, the Preface passage speaks of the "birth" of a new era of spirit as involving a "submerging [of its previous world] in the past, and in the labor of its own transformation" (*der bisherigen Welt . . . in die Vergangenheit hinab zu versenken, und in der Arbeit seines Umgestaltung* [Phän 18]). While there was doubt as to the meaning of the "submersion" and "transformation" in the concluding passage – as to whether it was just the past which was transformed by this sinking-inward of self-consciousness, or whether the "outer existence" of spirit became transformed as well, pointing to a future development – there is no such doubt about the Preface passage. The past is "submerged" in self-consciousness (as recollective knowledge of history), and the world itself is to be transformed and reborn, to "move forward" into a new epoch.¹⁰

3. Pro and Con

While I have been arguing that Hegel's eschatological vision of the completion of history and knowledge can best be understood as referring to the epochal consummation rather than to the absolute conclusion of spirit, I have also maintained that the ambiguity between these two readings is not ultimately resolved in his philosophy. Let us turn now to survey very briefly and selectively some of the stronger

evidence in Hegel's texts for both of the conflicting readings of completion.

In the Introduction to this *Philosophy of History*, Hegel says that spirit "exhibits not . . . mere . . . development, but the attainment of a definite result. The goal of attainment [is] determined at the outset: it is spirit in its completeness" (PhH 55). This is but one of many, many passages in which Hegel makes no qualifications on the completeness to be attained by spirit. And any such qualification is hard to find in Hegel's talk, throughout the *Philosophy of History*, of Europe as "the last stage in history" (PhH 442): "The history of the world travels from East to West, for Europe is absolutely the end of history" (PhH 103). In the *Philosophy of Mind* Hegel speaks of world history following a "path of liberation . . . by which the absolute final aim of the world is realized" (PhM §549). This conception of an absolute End is stated very clearly in various places, for example, in the *History of Philosophy*: "It may seem as if this progression [of spirit] were to go on into infinitude, but it has an *absolute end* in view" (HPh 1:35); and the *Encyclopædia*: "This liberation [of spirit] is not . . . something never completed, a liberation only striven for endlessly; on the contrary, mind wrests itself out of this progress to infinity, free[ing] itself absolutely from limitation" (PhM §386 *Zusatz*).

This view of the absolute End of history (or being in general) and knowledge is asserted by Hegel so as to dissociate himself from the "bad infinite" of Fichte's never-ending progress towards knowledge, and to attain an Absolute Knowledge which will vindicate truth from all relativism and scepticism. But Hegel also shares Fichte's view that being is essentially a becoming. Hence he writes that the "absolute Idea" – reason or thought in general, viewed as the unifying of subject and object, or the grand synthesis of thought and being – is "eternal creation," "essentially a process," "absolute negativity and for that reason . . . immanently dialectical" (SL §§214 *Anmerkung*, 215). Spirit is life, and life is "fluid" (*flüssig*), so that its "self-identity," or "relation to self," is immediately a "self-sundering" (*Entzweien*): spirit in this way is an "absolute unrest of self-movement" (*absolute Unruhe des reinen Sichselbstbewegens*) (PhS 108, 101). Spirit has a content, Hegel says, only because "it is its own restless process of superseding itself, or negativity, . . . self-alienating" ([*Der*] *Inhalt* . . . *ist seine Unruhe, sich selbst aufzuheben, oder die Negativität, . . . das sich entäußernde Selbst*) (PhS 490f). It is the "necessity of externalizing" itself which alone accounts for the "supreme freedom and assurance of [spirit's] self-knowledge" (PhS 491). To think of Absolute Knowledge as an attainment in which spirit had overcome all alienation and externalization,

all "unrest" and negativity, all self-superseding, would thus be to think of a state of mind in which the very condition for having knowledge had been overcome!

This ontology of the spirit leads Hegel to a view of knowledge, being, and history which conflicts with his view of an absolute End. He expresses this non-absolutist, epochal view clearly in his *Philosophy of Right*, in a passage we have already partially cited.

In history, the act of *Geist* is to gain consciousness of itself as *Geist*, to apprehend itself in its interpretation of itself to itself. This apprehension is its being and its principle, and the completion of apprehension at one stage is at the same time the rejection of that stage and its transition to a higher.

. . . The shapes which [the *Weltgeist*] takes pass away, while the absolute *Geist* prepares and works out its transition to its next higher stage.

. . . The history [of an epoch] . . . contains (a) the development of its principle from its latent embryonic stage until it blossoms into the self-conscious freedom of ethical life and presses in upon world-history; and (b) the period of its decline and fall, since it is its decline and fall that [(c)] signals the emergence in it of a higher principle (PhR §§343, 344, 347 *Anmerkung*).

This is Hegel's Phoenix theme, the central metaphor of his anatomy of being or spirit, where spirit is "eternally preparing for itself its funeral pile and consuming itself upon it, but so that from its ashes is produced a new, renovated, fresh life" (PhH 73). This is a vision of the eternally "restless mutation and change" of spirit (PhH 72), where the fulfillment or "satisfaction [of attaining] . . . what is desired," the principle or *telos* of a shape of spirit, "signals the death of that shape" (PhH 74f). "For spirit," Hegel says, "the highest attainment is self-knowledge, . . . [and] this it is destined to accomplish; but the accomplishment is at the same time its dissolution and the rise of another spirit, . . . another epoch of *Weltgeschichte*" (PhH 71). Spirit is destined to achieve its goal, in the recollective epiphany of Absolute Knowledge, but this achievement is episodic, occurring at the culmination of each epoch, where every recollective closure of the circle of an epoch reaches beyond itself to the opening of a new era, regenerating history at each moment of its temporary fulfillment, just as every satisfaction recreates desire at the instant of completion.

As with knowledge, which in order to be radically complete would have to destroy the very conditions for its own possibility, so

too with being and history – if being and history are to reach a radical consummation, an “absolute final end,” they would at once undermine the very conditions which animate the world-spirit. The final *satisfaction* of being and history would be the final *death* of spirit. This is why I feel we must sacrifice Hegel's desire to portray an absolute, radical consummation of knowledge and history and being, and seek the value of his philosophy in an epochal conception of the development of *Geist*. Only such a sacrifice can avoid the deeper, paralyzing sacrifice of the dialectical soul of Hegel's philosophy.

4. Other Views

a. *The Literal (Absolutist) Interpretation*

This proposal for a sacrificial renunciation of Hegel's absolutism does not sit well with the usual understanding of Hegel's system. For the majority of commentators on Hegel have read his language of the completion of spirit literally, seeing him as committed to the absolutist version of eschatology, and feeling that this spells the ultimate failure (and even incomprehensibility) of his philosophy. We have already mentioned Kierkegaard's view of the Hegelian system as an “impossible” system because of the conflict between its claim to portray the whole and its failure to complete itself.¹¹ Before surveying some other authors who share this view, I would like to linger a bit with Kierkegaard's critique, since in many ways it is representative of those which followed it.

Stephen Crites, in his *In the Twilight of Christendom: Hegel vs. Kierkegaard on Faith and History*, has a splendid discussion of Kierkegaard's critique of Hegel's theory of Absolute Knowledge, centering on the concept of recollection. He points out that Kierkegaard, in his *Postscript* and *Concept of Dread*, traces the Hegelian concept of *Erinnerung* back to Platonic recollection, and says of both that they involve a “movement backward” into knowledge: truth “lies behind as the past into which one only enters backwards,” he writes in the *Concept of Dread*. Genuinely existential truth, on the other hand, is found in the category of *action* (as opposed to contemplation), which does not involve a recollection, but a “*repetition*, by which one enters eternity forwards.”¹² Crites puts the difference very nicely: “Not in the re-collected necessity of thought, but in the contingency of historically situated action directed toward an uncollected future, a man appropriates truth.”¹³ This statement could stand as the refrain for virtually all post-Kierkegaardian critiques of Hegel's theory of Absolute Knowledge and recollection which see it as involving a

radical closure of history and an abandonment of concrete individuality by abstract thought.

Let me just note with regard to Kierkegaard that his category of "repetition," which he contrasts to the Hegelian-Platonic concept of "recollection," may not be nearly so incongruent with Hegel's recollection as he supposes. Kierkegaard's repetition is not the Hegelian "bad infinite" (which Hegel opposes to the "true infinite" of Absolute Knowledge), the simple repetition of one-after-another. This repetition (of the bad infinite variety) characterizes the aesthetic life, the life of Johannes the Seducer whose conquests number 1,001, each the same. Truly ethico-religious repetition is a reappropriation of the past through which the past becomes transformed and recast, opening a future of possibility for choice and action. In this sense, "repetition is and remains a *transcendence*."¹⁴ But under the epochal reading of Hegel's concept of *Erinnerung* which I am proposing, recollection is also a reappropriation of the past which transcends it and gives birth to a new world. That is, recollection points *forward*, just as Kierkegaardian repetition does. It is not a "movement backward" into knowledge, except in the same sense that repetition finds in the past the point of departure for its future. It is only under the absolutist interpretation of recollection that Kierkegaard's criticism (and Crites', and all subsequent readings which see Hegel as instituting a final completion of history) holds good.

Kierkegaard was but the first of many critics to see Hegel's talk of the completion of history literally, and to condemn him for the audacious claim, to use Kojève's words, "that there will never more be anything new on earth."¹⁵ Marx and Engels also viewed Hegel's "compulsion to make a system, . . . [and hence his] compulsion to make an end to the historical process . . . with some sort of absolute truth"¹⁶ as a central failure of his philosophy. Jean Hyppolite, who wishes to read Hegel's philosophy as asserting "a tension [of alienation] inseparable from existence,"¹⁷ also feels that Hegel becomes unfaithful to this principle with his move to the *Logic*, where the resolution of alienation leads to "*l'immobilisme*" of spirit.¹⁸

Eric Voegelin goes so far as to call Hegel a "megalomaniacal sorcerer," who sought "to gain power over history by putting an end to history." According to Voegelin, Hegel was driven by a "libido dominandi" and a Messianic obsession to become the Last Great Man, "the Great Man who abolishes history" itself. But, Voegelin asserts, such apocalyptic sorcery could only be achieved through "an attack on the dignity of man," since it implies that the very essence of man, his perpetual search for truth, is but "an imperfection of knowledge to be

overcome" by Hegel's own perfect philosophical knowledge.¹⁹ This idea that Absolute Knowledge amounts to an attack on human dignity is echoed by Dieter Jähnig when he characterizes the concept of a final *Erinnerung* as an "*eschatologisch-teleologischen Nihilismus*" which "demoralizes" humanity.²⁰

Alexandre Kojève says that Hegel "gives up the dialectical method" in order "to lay claim to absolute truth," and requires that "history is truly completed."²¹ But, he argues, with "the end of history, . . . man properly so-called . . . disappears. In point of fact, the end of time or history . . . means quite simply the cessation of action in the full sense of the term, . . . [and] the definite annihilation of man properly so-called."²² Stanley Rosen also says that Hegel's philosophy requires a "decisive completion" and "final resolution" of history and knowledge,²³ but suggests that "if we achieve the Hegelian science of totality, we must cease to become human."²⁴ François Châtelet, as we have seen, views the Hegelian vision of completion as radical, but as impossible to imagine, a "*séduisante fiction*."²⁵ And Charles Taylor speaks of the Hegelian "total overcoming" of alienation²⁶ as an expenditure of "enormous energy" to "make [his philosophy] yield an impossible conclusion."²⁷ We could go on and on.²⁸

I share the view represented by these commentators insofar as it points to a tension and conflict within Hegel's philosophy between his dialectic method, with its stress on the analysis of knowledge and being as intrinsically processes of becoming, and his absolutist conception of the completion of spirit. But I would counsel a more hesitant attitude toward Hegel's assertion of an absolute consummation of his system, insofar as he can be read as proposing a less radical version as well. As Avinieri cautions, "one should . . . recognize that, contrary to some of the accepted views about Hegel, there always remained a question mark beside what appears as his total absolutization of his contemporary age."²⁹

I have sought to show that there is firm textual support for this nonabsolutist alternative, and hence for the question mark that Avinieri refers to. I believe that our assessment of Hegel's philosophy is better served by locating the tension in his thought between two theories of completion rather than between a single (absolutist) theory of completion and the Hegelian dialectic and metaphysics of becoming. In this way Hegel is not necessarily condemned to an unavoidable opposition to his own dialectical method and his own metaphysics of becoming – in short, to all in his thought which makes his analysis of the *Bildung* of knowledge and history and being so profound. True, this condemnation would still apply if, as with the above commen-

tators, we were to adopt the absolutist theory of completion. But the nonabsolutist conception of an epochal consummation of spirit is not in any way opposed to this dialectic and metaphysics, but in fact is its logical consequence.

Richard Kroner speaks of *"die Antinomie zwischen System und Geschichte"* in Hegel's philosophy,³⁰ again (as with the previous commentators cited) as though there were only one conception of "system" in Hegel, and asks, almost with a sense of affront and indignation, *"mit welchem Recht Hegel, trotz [seiner] historische Resignation [i.e., his "resignation" to the perpetual progression of history, which continually moves beyond the results of a particular stage in history], für sein System absolute Geltung in Anspruch nehmen durfte."*³¹ Hegel's "right" to make this claim becomes much clearer if we see it as the outgrowth of his concern to overcome epistemological and historical relativism rather than simply as an affront to his metaphysics of becoming. The main conflict in Hegel is between the view of history and becoming which asserts an "absolute validity" that comes with the ultimate fruition of the teleological development of spirit, and a second view of history and becoming which asserts validity *within* a process of development that goes "ever on and on." When we actively advocate the second view, and are willing as a consequence to view the "affronting" first view as an unnecessary wrong turn in Hegel's system, we will be able to move beyond indignation to a logically consistent and philosophically profound view of the nature of history and the meaning of its (episodic, perpetually reoccurring) fulfillment.

b. Epochal Interpretations, Hesitant and Otherwise

While the most usual interpretation of Hegel's eschatological language has been to read it literally – and hence to adopt the absolutist version of completion with all its paralyzing consequences for his metaphysics of becoming – a handful of commentators have shown an inclination for the epochal reading. It seems to me that these writers fall into two broad groups. On the one hand, there are those who (like the vast majority of the "literalists" on the other sides) adopt the nonabsolutist interpretation all too quickly, without really acknowledging the claims of the other side of the dilemma – without, that is, really recognizing Hegel's fundamental ambivalence. I have already mentioned my feeling that Karl Löwith's reading is of this sort, although in the present discussion I will take Herbert Marcuse and Quentin Lauer as representatives of this group.³² On the other hand, there are those who adamantly insist on Hegel's ambivalence, and

precisely because of this, show a great deal of hesitancy in developing their nonabsolutist, epochal reading. Robert Solomon and Shlomo Avineri are good representatives of this group.³³ Since my own reading is epochal, I have obviously been very much influenced by the commentators in both of these groups, and would like to briefly sketch out some of the more important points of difference within an essentially shared perspective.

First, then, for all the undeniable brilliance and justly influential character of Marcuse's study of Hegel (*Reason and Revolution: Hegel and the Rise of Social Theory*), Marcuse adopts an epochal reading of Hegel's eschatology without any apparent attempt to come to grips with the alternative reading.³⁴ He points to several passages in Hegel's texts which emphasize the commitment to a metaphysics of becoming, and forthwith draws the conclusion that spirit can never escape temporality and history, since "the implications of [Hegel's] dialectical method destroy the very idea of timelessness" which would be implied by a final redemption of spirit from history.³⁵ Yet nowhere does he refer to Hegel's talk of the *Tilgung* of time and his explicit insistence on the timeless dimension of Absolute Knowledge, nor, indeed, to any passages in which Hegel develops his absolutist apocalyptic vision. It is not hard to find Marcuse's motivation for sidestepping the literal reading of Hegel's eschatology. The clue is found in his statement that "Hegel's strangely certain announcement that history has reached its end . . . announces the funeral of a class, not of history."³⁶ Marcuse is out to show that Hegel points forward to and finds his true significance in Marx,³⁷ and that the Hegelian eschatology in this way announces the impending end of the bourgeois class, pointing forward to the "new world" of revolutionary *praxis*. Marxist theory was the recognition of the true import of Hegel's theory of completion in seeing that "the established forms of [bourgeois] life were reaching the stage of their historical negation."³⁸

Let me make myself clear: I am not in any way seeking to impugn the legitimacy of the Marxist appropriation of Hegel. Nor, of course, am I casting aspersion on Marcuse's philosophic commitment to an epochal reading of Hegel, for this is just the reading I wish to adopt myself. My point here is only that Marcuse's reading is overly one-sided; that even though he opts for the interpretation I myself am arguing for, he does so without deriving it from a careful analysis of the deep ambivalence in which it is situated, and hence does not genuinely come to terms with the full scope of the issue. To be fair, Marcuse is not attempting to give a systematic treatment of Hegel's eschatology, and it may seem unfair of me to hold him to a standard

of exposition which is not intrinsic to the particular purposes of his text. My point, however, is precisely that the Hegelian theory of completion cannot be fully understood apart from a systematic treatment which does justice to the thoroughgoing ambiguity and tension in which it is formulated.

Quentin Lauer, like Marcuse, is one of the very best commentators on Hegel. Nevertheless, he also appears to choose the epochal interpretation of Hegel's eschatology without really taking the absolutist alternative seriously. In fact, Lauer dismisses out of hand "[the frequent objection] raised against Hegel's *Phenomenology* . . . that at the end it leaves no place to go; all the experiences are in, and so consciousness can now take leave of experience." But his reason for this dismissal is suspect. "The image which Hegel uses to illustrate the whole movement," Lauer continues, "dispels this objection: the movement of consciousness is circular; its end is not an end, because it is a return to the beginning . . . ; to be at the end is to be at the beginning."³⁹ I say this is suspect not because it in any way violates Hegel's methodology or epistemology. Indeed, Lauer expresses the Hegelian commitment to circularity very concisely and eloquently.⁴⁰ It is suspect because it only acknowledges one side of Hegel's ambiguous program, the side which insists on perpetual becoming, while glossing over the other side, equally present in Hegel, the side which insists on a radical closure of becoming.

It is true that Lauer never disputes Hegel's language of the completeness of spirit in Absolute Knowledge. He even writes at one point that with Absolute Knowledge, "the human spirit has successfully gone through all its stages, all necessary to its completeness." But he steadfastly refuses to read this language literally, insisting that "this does not mean that we have reached the end; rather we are at the beginning."⁴¹ Again, as with Marcuse, my objection is not that this epochal reading is unwarranted, but only that it is one-sided.

Let us turn now to the second group of commentators, represented here by Robert Solomon and Shlomo Avineri, who explicitly acknowledge the conflict in Hegel's philosophy between an absolutist language of completion and a nonabsolutist, open-ended alternative, but who finally hesitate to become fully committed to the epochal alternative they endorse.

Solomon very clearly calls attention to the "deep tension in Hegel's philosophy."

On the one hand, he is a philosopher whose main claim is to give us a unified all-inclusive world-view, which he calls 'the Absolute.' On

the other hand, he is the philosopher of change. . . . Insofar as he wants to provide us with a single and, he would add, eternal view of a unified cosmos – 'the Absolute,' Hegel has to minimize the ultimate reality of differences and of change; insofar as he stresses the differences and change he has to deny or at least postpone indefinitely the Absolute.⁴²

Beyond this explicit statement of Hegel's ambivalence, Solomon also seems to deny that we can find any meaningful *Aufhebung* of this tension, a point I have tried to argue as well, for he speaks of "two different Hegels"⁴³ and nowhere suggests that they might merge into one. Finally, Solomon adopts the nonabsolutist interpretation of Hegel's eschatology – although, interestingly, he calls this the "much more radical Hegel."⁴⁴ Thus he describes the guiding thread of his work to be the "celebration" of the Hegel who denies any final consummation of history, the "philosopher of change" who preaches the doctrine of becoming "running on without end."⁴⁵

Thus far my approach is the same as Solomon's. But there are some important differences as well. In the first place, Solomon makes it clear that his choice of the nonabsolutist (or for him, radical) reading of Hegel is *just a question of emphasis*;⁴⁶ he draws back from actually advocating the epochal interpretation he emphasizes, and hence "celebrates" the Heraclitian Hegel more as a matter of inclination than philosophic commitment. Second, Solomon does not offer a systematic portrayal of the question of completion; his study is devoted to a reading of the *Phenomenology*, and while it is a very good, witty, and comprehensive reading of Hegel's first major work, it excludes by intention several other works (most importantly, the lecture cycles on the *History of Philosophy* and the *Philosophy of History*, and the "shorter" [*Encyclopædia*] and "larger" *Logics*) where the issue of completion is raised in different and often more direct ways than it is in the *Phenomenology*. Finally, Solomon seems a bit bemused, even disappointed, with the Heraclitian Hegel he chooses to emphasize, for he believes that the Absolute which corresponds to a philosophy of perpetual becoming, when finally arrived at, will be a "fraud, or at most, just another stage on the journey. Or, as Alastair MacIntyre has said of the Absolute, à la [Gertrude] Stein, 'There is no *there* there.'"⁴⁷

My own argument for an epochal reading of Hegel's eschatology, so far from leading to the judgment of fraud, wants to suggest that such a judgment is possible only if we expect to find an apocalyptic closure of history in Absolute Knowledge. Since Solomon is only emphasizing the epochal reading, while leaving Hegel's absolutist

language as it stands, it is not surprising that he will be disappointed when he comes to confront the Absolute. My own counsel is that we must actively advocate the epochal interpretation, and resolve the dilemma which Hegel could not bring himself to resolve, by rejecting his absolutist apocalyptic vision as incompatible with the dialectical structure of thought and being which makes his philosophy possible. Under such a reading, we must reject MacIntyre's and Solomon's sense that "there is no *there* there" in Absolute Knowledge, for in fact there will be *many* "there's there," as each epoch of history reaches the culmination of its purpose and meaning in the recollective knowledge of its past.

Shlomo Avinieri, like Solomon, is very much attuned to the tension in Hegel's eschatology. For while he argues, as does Solomon, for an epochal reading, one where the "process of historical development . . . never attains absolute dimensions," he is certainly aware of the opposing tendency, where "Hegel sees his own contemporary age as the apex of historical development" and "history has been grasped in its totality for the first time."⁴⁸ But while it is clear that Avinieri very strongly supports an epochal reading, claiming that "Hegel was aware that the future was still open in terms of the development of new cultures,"⁴⁹ he does not make clear *how* the future is to be open given Hegel's insistence on his own age as the culmination of history.

I suspect that Avinieri finally wants to dismiss the absolutist tendency in Hegel as an aberration, as is suggested when he concludes his argument by writing that Hegel "did not wholly absolutize his own contemporary world."⁵⁰ But how can one only *partially* "absolutize" history? Unless, of course, we mean by this curious phrase that *every* epoch achieves an "absolute" completion, meaning a final culmination of its own spirit, without implying anything about an absolute completion of history itself. If this is indeed Avinieri's meaning, then his proposal finally collapses into the epochal reading without coming fully to grips with the absolutist interpretation.

c. Attempts at a Synthetic Interpretation

Finally, to complete our sketch of alternative interpretations of Hegel's eschatology, there is a small group of commentators who seek to find a way to integrate the epochal and absolutist readings, purporting to discover just the sort of synthesis of the two poles of Hegel's ambivalence which I have maintained is unintelligible. Emil Fackenheim and J. N. Findlay are two of the most articulate and committed representatives of this group.⁵¹

Fackenheim, in his sensitive and impressive work on *The Religious Dimension in Hegel's Thought*, writes that the Hegelian "'system' is wholly misunderstood unless the usual connotation of closedness is brought into immediate clash with a notion of total openness. Hegel's system is by its own admission and insistence a closed circle, but it is also totally open."⁵² It is Fackenheim's position that a choice for either side of this apparent paradox at the expense of the other would amount to a confusion and misunderstanding. Hence, his position represents a strong chastisement of my own point of view, which explicitly calls for such a choice.

Unfortunately, Fackenheim does not develop this argument into the sort of consideration of the close of history which would be necessary in order to serve as an adequate explanation of Hegel's eschatology. In his fourth chapter, which he titles "The Hegelian Middle," and which he has promised in a footnote to the above quotation "will be wholly devoted to . . . this vital point [of a synthesis of the dual character of closure and openness in Hegel's system]," his concern is not with the issue of what the openness or closedness of Hegel's system entails either for history or Absolute Knowledge, but with what he calls the "scandal" of the split between right- and left-wing Hegelians. According to Fackenheim's definition of these two schools of Hegel's followers, the right-wing school views Hegel as a "transcendent metaphysician" – that is, as someone who places reality in a transcendent realm apart from the actual empirical world – while the left-wing school reads him as professing a doctrine of "immanentism," that is, as entirely confining reality to the empirical world, while denying all transcendent reality. Hence, the issue of the openness or closedness of the Hegelian system has been displaced from a consideration of the problem of historical time, and instead takes shape as the problem of the tension between competing metaphysics of transcendentalism and immanentism. And Fackenheim's purpose becomes one of showing that "the central claim of Hegelian thought is to repudiate the need for choice between these right- and left-wing alternatives."⁵³

Now there may well be a connection between these two problems, insofar as the right-wing (transcendental) interpretation seems to imply a certain closure of the Hegelian system, where thought and being are not open to the empirical world of change; and insofar as the left-wing (immanent) interpretation implies a complete openness to change, since reality is swept up in the perpetual flux of the empirical world. But it is one thing to show that Hegel seeks to unite a transcendent and an immanent metaphysics – we have sought to show this

in our analysis of Hegel's theory of truth – and quite another to show what the consequences of such a unity are for the issue of eschatology. And these consequences are by no means obvious. For it seems perfectly possible for the transcendentalist to maintain both that reality is "closed" to *empirical* change and completely open-ended within its own *transcendent* sphere, since this is still the realm of spirit, and all spirit is perpetual becoming. This would be a non-Platonic transcendentalism, to be sure, but there is nothing I can see which would logically force a transcendentalist to adopt the Platonic position that only the phenomenal world is a theater of change. Similarly, it seems perfectly possible for the immanent metaphysician to assert both that empirical reality is sheer flux and also governed by (an immanent) *telos* which will inevitably be achieved and leave no further course for historical evolution.

Even if Fackenheim is right that there is a *certain sort* of closure entailed by the right-wing position, and a *certain sort* of openness entailed by the left-wing position, this may not necessarily imply anything for the issue of eschatology. In order for Fackenheim to trace out his synthetic proposal to its consequences for Hegel's theory of the End of history, he would have to show how the view that history has a definitive completion, beyond which there can be no further development, is compatible with the view that history has only epochal completions which always point beyond themselves to subsequent cycles of evolution. And I cannot imagine the alchemical incantation which could possibly convert this contradiction into a plausible proposition. It may be, as Hegel claims in his *Encyclopædia*, that "contradiction is the very moving principle of the world" (SL §119 *Zusatz*), but it is equally true, as Hegel says in the *Anmerkung* to the same passage, that some contradictions are simply "inane."

J. N. Findlay, like Fackenheim, proposes a reading of the Hegelian eschatology which is alluring in its attempt to expose the Hegelian ambiguity as only a superficial ambiguity, and hence in its attempt to completely solve the apparent conflict in his philosophy, by arguing that there is a valid synthesis of the absolutist and nonabsolutist versions of completion. And Findlay, unlike Fackenheim, explicitly seeks to apply this synthetic proposal to the issue of Hegel's eschatology (albeit with reference to Absolute Knowledge rather than directly to the question of the close of history).

Hegel assumes that *this progress* [of knowledge] *must have a final term, a state where knowledge need no longer transcend or correct itself.*
 . . . Such a conception might seem to go too far, for surely an endless

inadequacy of knowledge to its object would not destroy all meaning and validity in such knowledge. . . . *Hegel will, however, marvelously include in his final notion of the final state of knowledge the notion of an endless progress that can have no final term.* For he conceives that, precisely in seeing that the object is an endless problem, we forthwith see it as not being a problem at all. For what the object in itself is, is simply to be the other, the stimulant of knowledge and practice, which in being for ever capable of being remolded and re-interpreted, is also everlastingly pinned down and found out being just what it is.⁵⁴

Findlay's point seems to be that Absolute Knowledge is the comprehension of the very process of the perpetual becoming of knowledge. The "final term" of knowledge – Absolute Knowledge – is thus the philosophic apprehension of the truth that there is an "endless progress" of knowledge "that can have *no final term*." This is perhaps not as paradoxical as it may seem, if there are two senses of finality involved: the one, which characterizes Absolute Knowledge, being a finality in the sense of an ultimate, timeless truth, which sees the endless "remolding" of the object of knowledge as the highest truth and very essence of knowledge; and the other, a finality that is never achieved due to the fact that the object of knowledge is an "endless problem" by nature, "forever capable of being remolded."

There is some support for this reading in Hegel's texts. For as we have seen, Hegel's teleology is circular, so that the *telos* or End is described as being more than a mere result, but present in the whole process of development.

The real issue is not exhausted by stating [the purpose to be achieved] as an aim [Hegel says], but by carrying it out; nor is the result [merely] the actual whole, but rather *the result together with the process through which it [comes to be]*. . . . The bare result is the corpse which has left the guiding tendency behind it (PhS 2f).

The truth is the whole, but the whole is nothing other than the essence [or *telos*] consummating itself through its development (PhS 11).

We must distinguish between what is the whole process and what is only a moment of the process; the universal, as law, also has process within it, and *lives only as a process*, but it is not a *part* of the process (PhN §258 Zusatz).

. . . the consummation of the infinite end, therefore, consists merely in removing the illusion which makes it seem yet unaccomplished. . . . The [*telos*] . . . is *eternally accomplishing itself in the*

world, and the result is that it . . . [is] already . . . in full actuality accomplished (SL §212 *Zusatz*; and cf. 233 *Zusatz*).

The End, then, is itself a process, and the whole is nothing other than the dialectical development of the End. To say that the End is accomplished is really no more than to say that it is ever accomplishing itself.

In my view, Findlay's alluring solution to the question of completion is not finally satisfactory, and in the same way, the above citations from Hegel do not solve the problem. For this proposed solution essentially collapses into the nonabsolutist version of completion, rather than being a true synthesis of the absolutist and nonabsolutist poles. It is not plausible, I feel, to say that Hegel both achieves his goal of a "final term" to the progress of knowledge, "a state where knowledge need no longer transcend or correct itself," and that he preserves his conception of the dialectical open-endedness of knowledge – unless, that is, we only mean that the "final term" is perpetually reached with each successive epoch, and that "knowledge need no longer transcend or correct itself" only with respect to its shape at the close of an epoch. If the accomplishment or fulfillment of the End will continually "stimulate" a "remolding" of the End, and if Absolute Knowledge means nothing other than the insight into the perpetual development of knowledge, then when we speak, as Hegel does, of the "absolute end of the progression" (HPH 1:35), or of the absolute "conclusion of the movement in which spirit has shaped itself," we can only be speaking of an "absolute" which is always relative to a further development, and a "completion" which is always open-ended. And this seems an odd way to talk – and, indeed, an unintelligible manner of speech – if we intend to preserve the meaning of a radical sense of closure for the words "absolute" and "completion." It loses its oddity only if we abandon the attempt to smuggle this absolutist meaning into the epochal connotation of the words. All attempts to synthesize the epochal and absolutist readings of Hegel's eschatology inevitably lead to a confusion of language, where, as Hegel says in another context, we cannot say what we *mean* to say (PhS 60–66).

5. Conclusion

Towards the end of his "larger" *Logic* Hegel writes that "negativity . . . [is] the innermost source of all activity, of all animate and spiritual self-movement, the dialectical soul that everything true possesses and

through which alone it is true" (LL 835). I have sought to show that this "dialectical soul" of Hegel's philosophy is threatened by his absolutist eschatology, where spirit achieves an absolute resolution of its dialectic of negativity and becoming. Hence, if we are to retain the integrity of the Hegelian dialectic, we should opt for his nonabsolutist, open-ended, epochal eschatology. If this dialectical soul were to be excised, then the guiding aim of Hegel's philosophy, his project for a grand synthesis of thought and being, would take on a very different guise than the one we have seen it to wear throughout our analysis of his epistemology and metaphysics. For our analysis has disclosed a vision of thought and being as symbiotically engaged in a dynamic process of evolution, where each is swept up in a restless motion of metamorphosis, animated by an impulse or force or desire towards transformation, reaching out towards each other in a historical courtship of strife and reconciliation. Over and over again, Hegel has insisted that spirit only has life insofar as it is grounded in this process of "restless mutation and change." If the grand synthesis of thought and being were finally to dispense with this dialectical soul, and so alter the metabolism of its life as to achieve a final "repose" of spirit, a harmony of thought and being which contradicted the dynamic definition of each of its terms, then we would be left with a *dead* synthesis – for all satisfaction brings a natural death.

In one of the most famous passages of the *Phenomenology*, Hegel says that "the wounds of the spirit heal, and leave no scars behind" (PhS 407). This idea was already prefigured in his early *Spirit of Christianity*, where he wrote that from the "severed life" of spirit, "life can heal its wounds again" (SXty 230). But insofar as Hegel's portrayal of spirit as the *Bildung* of knowledge and the historical-groundedness of being depends upon his principle that "becoming [is] the fundamental feature of all existence" (SL §88 *Zusatz*), then we must not suppose that the "wounds of spirit" ever heal over so fully that it will not bleed again, that it will not be thrown into the negativity, the strife and conflict, of self-development. If we are to appreciate the depth of Hegel's analysis of spirit, we must hold him to his view that "the life of spirit is not the life that shrinks from . . . the tremendous power of the negative . . . and keeps itself untouched by devastation, but rather the life that endures it and maintains itself in it" (PhS 19). The very life of spirit, as Hegel portrays it, depends on its immersion in the flux of existence, in the "labor of its own transformation" (PhS 6), and ensures that, on pain of death, it will never cease from exploration, from striving, from becoming.

What are we to say of Hegel's ideal of attaining a fulfillment of

"Absolute Knowledge" in which we are no longer "on the pathway to truth" but have *arrived* at the "absolute truth," and in which there is a final "vanishing" of and "liberation" from all "opposition of consciousness [to its world]" (LL 60, 70, 49)? Similarly, what are we to say of his talk of a fulfillment of being in which the "endless striving" of becoming has been superseded, and spirit has "concluded the movement in which it has shaped itself"? Hegel's ideal of a radical completion to knowledge and being must be set aside, I have argued, in order to retain and affirm the integrity of his dialectic. The question now becomes, what does this mean for his hope of overcoming epistemological relativism, a hope which led him to posit his absolutist ideal in the first place?

One way of approaching this question is to reformulate it in terms of Hegel's relation to Fichte. As we have noted, Hegel argues against Fichte on the grounds that his philosophy condemns human knowledge and human existence to a never-ending progression without fruition, so that our knowledge remains a mere approximation to truth and being remains forever alienated. The question is, if we are to read Hegel in terms of his nonabsolutist doctrine of the completion of knowledge and being, then isn't he subject to the same sort of criticism that he lodges against Fichte? For, if there is no *final* consummation of knowledge and being, then, as Hegel says, spirit "goes ever on and on, because spirit is progress alone" (HPh 3:546), and "spirit is indeed never at rest but always engaged in moving forward" (PhS 7). But this is precisely what Fichte says!

We must, I think, conclude that Hegel's opposition to Fichte does in fact backfire to a certain extent – that his criticism of the Fichtean vision of the infinitely progressive character of spirit is in many ways applicable to his own vision of the "eternal creation" of spirit. This is the cost of adopting the epochal interpretation of completion, and it would be foolish to try to explain it away. There are some important differences between Fichte and Hegel, however, which help to lessen the extent to which Hegel would otherwise fall into the same sort of relativism that he charges Fichte with.

While Fichte is an idealist, and hence says that all being is being-for-consciousness,⁵⁵ still, there is a sense in which the object of consciousness, the world, or the "not-self," is a fundamentally alien Other to consciousness. True, the "not-self" is "posited" by the self,⁵⁶ but on the other hand there is always a sense in which the "not-self," or world, is infinitely opposed to the self: "the not-self . . . [is in] absolute opposition . . . [to] the self";⁵⁷ "there emerges in [the self] a disparity, and hence something alien to itself, . . . [and] moreover we are unable to say

anything further at all of this alien element, save that it is not derivable from the inner nature of the self."⁵⁸ This irreducibly alien element of the world is the "Anstoß" that limits the self,⁵⁹ and which is "irreconcilable" with the self.⁶⁰

For Hegel, the development of spirit also depends on a disparity between the self and the world, a process of distinction between consciousness and object. And disparity will constantly arise insofar as spirit is a perpetually progressing development. This is the element of discord that we have seen throughout our work to be so important to Hegel's anatomy of spirit. But, to cite again a passage from the *History of Philosophy* which we used in our introduction to frame the issue of Hegel's grand synthesis, while "the eternal life [of spirit] consists in the very process of continually producing the opposition" of consciousness and object, it also consists in the process of "continually reconciling it" (HPh 3:551). This is the element of harmony in the midst of discord, the perpetually regenerating reconciliation of oppositions which is the heart of Hegel's grand synthesis. The world is not ultimately alien to self-consciousness (being is not finally set over against thought), for although spirit is constantly presented with new challenges, and will in turn constantly be re-alienated from its world, every stage of the development of spirit has within itself the seed of its reconciliation with the world – each epoch can "fulfill its principle."

Hence Hegel's epochal conception of the fulfillment of knowledge and being is sufficient to dissociate him from the Fichtean notion of the "irreconcilability" of the self with the "alien element" of the world, and thus to support his vision of a grand synthesis. It is important to note that Hegel's emphasis on the *historical* manifestation of the development of knowledge and being is absent in Fichte. And it is just Hegel's notion of history as an epochal development, where each epoch can achieve its "principle" or *telos*, that allows him to vindicate knowledge from the kind of infinitely unrealizable project that he views Fichte's conception of knowledge as condemning us to. History for Hegel is the theater of knowledge solving its puzzles, of reason transforming its world, of man achieving union with the divine plan. And the fact that the fruition of knowledge in history brings with it the rise of new puzzles, of "new worlds" which pose new problems for spirit, does not diminish the power of reason to "penetrate" the world. Nor does the fact that God's plan is a perpetual unfolding of the *Logos* mean that man never attains the Kingdom of God, for this Kingdom is not a redemption of man *from* history, but a redemption *in* history, a harmonization of human reason and divine *Logos* in the continual

process of their "labor of transformation" of the world.

But is it not just Hegel's emphasis on the historical which makes his system vulnerable to the charge of relativism? It may be that Hegel avoids the sort of relativism he interprets Fichte's philosophy as committing us to – since knowledge does in fact overcome its opposition to the world epochally. But there is another, deeper sort of relativism which seems to arise with this epochal view: if knowledge and truth are relative to the historical context in which they unfold, and if there is always a further development of knowledge and truth on the horizon, then there seems to be no "Absolute" knowledge or truth in a sense which would transcend particular historical contexts. In this way, Hegel seems unable to escape the position of *historical relativism*.

There is, I believe, no way for Hegel to avoid a certain sort of historical relativism, if he is at the same time to remain faithful to his metaphysics of becoming. But we must be very careful to understand in what sense "historical relativism" is applicable to Hegel. He is very far from the sort of total historical or cultural relativism that people like William Graham Sumner propose.⁶¹ According to Sumner, the sole "impelling force" of the historical development of man is his response to pleasure and pain, and his instinct of self-preservation.⁶² From this motivation of self-preservation, man adopts habits or customs, which are converted without further ado into mores, or normatively regulating "folkways." Customs never arise consciously, however, and folkways are "not creations of human purpose," but are "like the instinctive ways of animals," adopted "without rational reflection or purpose."⁶³ Historical development is due to external changes in "life conditions," and our subsequent instinctual response, which leads to the unconscious adaptation to new customs and mores.⁶⁴ There is thus no objective perspective from which we can distance ourselves from the "impelling force" of our instinctual response to pleasure and pain, or self-preservation – no rational standpoint from which we can reflect on our needs and consciously shape our normative "folkways" or the course of our history.⁶⁵

Hegel is absolutely opposed to this sort of historical or cultural relativism. It is true that his doctrine of the *List der Vernunft* postulates that individual action is in "unconscious service" to a rational *telos* (see Chapter Two above). But it is just because for Hegel there is this rational *telos* that he is utterly at odds with Sumner. Sumner's view of history involves the deliberate annihilation of reason as in any sense formative of the course of cultural development; Hegel's view of history is that it is the very manifestation of reason. Similarly, history is not for Hegel simply the alteration of cultures because of the

external change in life conditions, but the progressive *Bildung* of the purposive activity of reason. Reason, not instinct, is the revolutionary force in history, "begetting revolutions in the world as well as in individuals" (HPh 3:8), transforming the alien world into its own image.

John Dewey, who some time after the break with his early Hegelianism wrote that "were it possible for me to be a devotee of any system, I still should believe that there is greater richness and greater variety of insight in Hegel than in any other single systematic philosopher,"⁶⁶ still showed strong traces of his Hegelian heritage when he argued in his *Art as Experience*⁶⁷ that while genuine human experience is *prefigured* in our "animal ancestry," in the purely instinctive interaction with our environment, it becomes a fully human experience only insofar as this instinctual component is reconstructed and given a meaning by consciousness. Otherwise experience is "inchoate," a literally meaningless, directionless event. So too Hegel portrays man's relation of mere desire toward his environment, where "he does not open his mind to . . . the outer world . . . as a thinking being," but simply seeks to "consume" things (ARP 64), as a merely ersatz form of action, since genuine action consists in "converting" or "transforming" this desire into a rational relation to our world, where we gain the element of freedom which is essential to authentically creative action. Hence both Dewey and Hegel acknowledge the element of desire in human experience, but insist that it must be reconstructed – or "sublimated," in the sense of transfiguring and redirecting it through conscious purpose – if we are to make sense of the intentional (or to use Dewey's phrase, the "expressive") character of action. To ignore this element of creative intentionality in human experience and the history which it engenders, would be to reduce historical culture to an inchoate imbroglio of biological impulses.

This complete opposition of the Hegelian philosophy to the extreme form of historical relativism represented by Sumner gives us a clearer picture of the sense in which Hegel does adopt a sort of historical relativism. Since history is the theater of the progressive unfolding of reason, each epoch represents what Hegel calls a *Gestalt* of spirit, and the fulfillment of the principle of that *Gestalt* gives rise to a "new world" or new shape of spirit. Hence knowledge is relative to the "principle" of an epoch.⁶⁸ But there is a continuity between *Gestalten*, where each stage "is a link in the whole chain of spiritual development" (HPh 2:45). History is not a discontinuous, fragmented system, but a progressive force impelled onward by a common spirit. Knowledge in its highest sense always entails a recollective recovery of the past, which is the source and foundation for every progress and

"rebirth" of history. Each new shape of history is animated by a consciousness of its heritage, united with the past by a shared participation in the universal characteristics of the human spirit. In this sense, then, there is an eternal dimension of truth, as well as its temporal manifestation. Reason is the universal *telos* of history, the "eternal life" of spirit, as Hegel says. Our knowledge develops as our world is transformed and altered by our historical experience, and hence knowledge is in a fundamental sense always incomplete – for knowledge, being historically grounded, always has a future development on the horizon – but the course of development is itself guided by a universal and eternal *Logos*, *nous*, reason, spirit. If history were directed solely by the mechanics of instinct and desire accommodating themselves to changing external conditions of the environment, we could only have an artificial and farfetched explanation of the evolutionary dialectic of history. However much we might adopt such a Darwinian mechanics of instinct to account for *biological* evolution, its application to social, cultural history leaves far too much out of account, as Darwin himself warned time and again.

We should recall that there is a qualitative distinction for Hegel between the form of the analytic understanding and the form of speculative reason. Reason is the liberation of mind from the one-sided distinctions of the understanding which inevitably lead to scepticism and spiritual disenchantment with the world. Reason is the vision of the unity within our apparently fragmented world, of harmony in the midst of discord, and the vision of our power to transform the world and make it into a rational place. It is this unifying, synthesizing, reconciling *form* of reason which is eternal, and which makes the epochs of history a single whole or system. While this whole or system is open-ended, it is yet a whole, for the very impulse to development which ensures that it will be open-ended is an impulse of reason which remains constant through the perpetual course of transition.

Kojève is but one of many commentators who says that in the final analysis, Hegel's failure to close his system, to reach a tenable final completion of being and knowledge and history, means that he cannot refute scepticism.⁶⁹ And in a sense Kojève is right. The sceptic can point to the absence of a definitive completion of knowledge beyond which there will be no development, and raise his hands in despair. But there is more to be said. As we saw in Chapter Four, Hegel himself regards scepticism as "invincible" and "irrefutable" – *insofar as it is a state of mind*, or way of life, "something which men give themselves over to" (HPh 2:329). Scepticism arises from a "true, profound" insight into

the nature of the world and the nature of thought, that each are governed by a dialectical negativity: "it is the demonstration that all that is determinate and finite is unstable" (HPh 2:331, 330). But scepticism constantly threatens to become a sort of "paralysis," an "abyss of self-consciousness . . . [which] has swallowed up everything," an "insecurity" and "solitude of mind within itself," and a "decay . . . of the world" (HPh 2:329, 371, 347, 372).

Hegel's whole philosophy is directed against this paralysis and decay, against the "despairing creed" that thought is finally cut off from the world of being and can only grope amongst the subjective shadows of its own imagination. "The ultimate aim and business of philosophy," Hegel says, "is to reconcile thought with reality" – to show the "greatness of the craving with which mind seeks to find itself in what lies outside of itself, . . . to embrace the universe within itself, and transform it into an intelligent world" (HPh 3:545f). Hegel's philosophic system may fail to refute scepticism, for, as Hegel himself says, scepticism "depends [at bottom] on the will of the individual, and no one can . . . possibly drive another out of the negativity [of his thought]" (HPh 2:330). But Hegel builds a strong case for displacing the "despairing creed" of the sceptic with a vision of the power of mind to triumph over this alienated consciousness. His epistemology and metaphysics present us with forceful arguments for seeing the power of mind to transform its world, to "divest the objective world that stands opposed to us of its alien character, and to find ourselves at home in it" (SL §194 *Zusatz*). This power and this discovery attest to the historically unfolding unity of thought and being, the impulse of thought to reach out to being, to create and re-create a harmony with being in the midst of discord. And this discord is revealed as the womb in which the impulse towards the evolving transformation and reunification of thought and being is continually reborn.

NOTES

Chapter One

1. All references to Hegel's works will be abbreviated and given parenthetically in the text, followed by the volume number (where applicable) and page number (or section number – '§' – where appropriate).

Abbreviations are listed on p. xi.

2. Friedrich Engels, *Ludwig Feuerbach and the Outcome of Classical German Philosophy*, ed. C. P. Dutt (New York, 1978), p. 20.

3. John Milton, *L'Allegro* l. 142.

4. See also HPh 3:312, and "The Spirit of Christianity and its Fate" ('SXty'), p. 232.

5. Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Hegel's Dialectic: Five Hermeneutical Studies*, trans. P. Christopher Smith (New Haven and London, 1976), p. 105.

6. I will have occasion to refer to several different interpretations of Hegel's eschatological language, and the dilemma it evokes, in Chapter Seven, where I will explicitly compare and contrast them in relation to my own reading. I should note here, however, that my choice for a nonabsolutist reading of Hegel's eschatology is certainly not unique, but is adopted (or at least flirted with) by several other commentators. I will speak in some detail of the views of Karl Löwith, Herbert Marcuse, Quentin Lauer, Robert Solomon, and Shlomo Avineri in Chapter Seven, as well as of the views of Emil Fackenheim and J. N. Findlay, who propose a synthesis of the absolutist and nonabsolutist readings of the dilemma. I have been influenced by all of these writers, but remain troubled and unconvinced in different ways by the manner in which each of them works out his interpretation.

7. This is from Heckman's Introduction to his translation (with Samuel Cherniak) of Jean Hyppolite's *Genesis and Structure of Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit* (Evanston, 1974), p. xli.

Chapter Two

1. Wittgenstein, *Philosophische Untersuchungen/Philosophical Investigations*, facing page translation by G. E. M. Anscombe (New York, 1962), section 123.

2. Specifically, I will be deferring discussion of the following important elements of Hegel's conception of truth: truth as a "system" or "whole," his theory of demonstration, and the question of the relation between truth and falsity. See esp. Chapter Five.

3. Fichte's *Science of Knowledge (Wissenschaftslehre)*, ed. and trans. Peter Heath and John Lachs (New York, 1970), 1: 496 [pagination of the *Gesamtausgabe* of I. H. Fichte]. Cf. also Descartes, *Discourse on the Method of Rightly Conducting the Reason and Seeking Truth in the Sciences*, in *The Rationalists*, trans. John Veitch (Garden City, New York [1960?]), pp. 43f:

Of philosophy I will say nothing, except that when I saw that it had been cultivated for many ages by the most distinguished men, . . . yet there is not a single matter within its sphere which is not still in dispute, and nothing therefore which is above doubt. . . .

4. See Shlomo Avineri, *Hegel's Theory of the Modern State* (Cambridge, 1972), p. x: "For Hegel, . . . history, as change, is the key for meaning."

5. In a way, Plato also had to find an answer to this dilemma, for he wrote in his *Sophist* (249^{c-d}):

The philosopher who values knowledge . . . must refuse to accept . . . the doctrine that all reality is changeless, and he must also turn a deaf ear to the other party who represent reality as everywhere changing. Like a child begging for 'both,' he must declare that reality or the sum of things is both at once – all that is unchangeable and all that is in change.

Still, Plato's general solution to this dilemma tends towards a discrediting of the world of temporality, which is "unreal" in an ultimate sense. Hegel is very much opposed to this form of idealism, and it is his constant endeavor to uncover the rational, law-like infrastructure of process, flux, change.

For a very thoughtful analysis of Hegel's concept of eternity, see Klaus Hedwig, "Hegel: Time and Eternity," *Dialogue* 9 (1970-71): 139-53. Hedwig argues that eternity for Hegel is not properly understood as occurring "outside" of time, but is rather the "realization of time" (p. 149). Merold Westphal makes a similar argument, suggesting that eternity "comes into time" rather than transcending time: *History and Truth in Hegel's Phenomenology* (Atlantic Highlands, N.J., 1982), p. 220. Joseph C. Flay gives a critical discussion of the concept of eternity as it emerges in the "Absolute Knowledge" section of the

Phenomenology: Hegel's Quest for Certainty (Albany, 1984), pp. 243–48. Alexandre Kojève situates Hegel's theory of time and eternity with reference to Plato, Aristotle, Spinoza and Kant: *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel* (Ithaca, 1980), pp. 100–49. And see John Burbidge, "Concept and Time in Hegel," *Dialogue* 12 (1973): 403–22; Bernhard Lakebrink, "Hegels Metaphysik der Zeit," *Philosophisches Jahrbuch* 74 (1966–67): 284–93; Paul E. Rasmussen, "The Meaning of Time in Hegel's *Phenomenology of Mind*," *Kinesis* 4 (1972): 96–105.

6. Reprinted from *Mind* 65 (1956): 289–311, in P. F. Strawson, ed., *Philosophical Logic* (Oxford, 1967).

7. Frege, p. 20. Cf. Hegel: "The true is universal . . . ; as such it can be only in and for thought." *Reason in History* (Hegel's Introduction to the *Philosophy of History*, drawing on the 3rd as well as the 2nd edition), trans. Robert S. Hartman (Indianapolis, 1953), p. 18.

8. Frege, p. 29.

9. Frege, p. 38.

10. Frege, p. 38.

11. Compare Aristotle, who says that a thing is fully actual only when it attains its end (*Metaphysics* 1023^a33), but that this end and actuality is the very process of movement of the thing (*Physics* 201^b13).

12. For example, Hegel's method is exactly parallel to Aristotle's in the respect that it involves a beginning with "what is better known or familiar to us" and a progress to what is "more knowable in itself, or 'by nature'" (*Physics* 184^a17). Further, Hegel perpetually distinguishes between the object as it is "for immediate consciousness" and as it is in its actual being.

For the distinction between the orders of knowing and being, see Aristotle, *Posterior Analytics* 71^b, 35–72^a1; and Aquinas, *Summa Theologica* I, Q16, A3.

13. Spinoza's *Ethics*, Part II, Proposition VII, in R. H. M. Elwes, trans., *The Chief Works of Spinoza* (New York, 1951).

14. Aristotle, *Parts of Animals* 640^a23.

15. For Aristotle, this is true of all beings "which are by nature [i.e., which have their principle of motion within themselves]" (v. *Physics* 199^a7), as well as of works of art (v. *Parts of Animals* 639^b15). Where Hegel goes well beyond the intentions of the Aristotelian model is in his application of this 'principle of development' to the course of history. See Chapter Four, section 1a below.

16. Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 993^b20, 15 (emphasis added).

17. F. E. Abbot, *The Syllogistic Philosophy*, 2 vols. (Boston, 1906), vol. 1, p. 269.

18. Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, trans. Colin Smith (London, 1978), p. 31.

19. For a further discussion of this point, see Chapter Five, pp. 96, 103. See also Quentin Lauer's *Essays in Hegelian Dialectic* (New York, 1977), pp. 69–72.

20. Herbert Marcuse, *Hegel's Ontology and the Theory of Historicity*, trans. Seyla Benhabib (Cambridge, 1987 [first published in 1932]), p. 311.

21. Dunayevskaya, *Philosophy and Revolution* (Brighton, Sussex, 1973), p. 6.

22. Julia Kristeva, *La révolution du langage poétique* (Paris, 1974), p. 122.

23. Karl Marx, "Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844," in *Karl Marx: Early Writings*, trans. Gregor Benton and Rodney Livingstone (New York, 1975), p. 396.

24. We are here only asking what this 'subject' (*das Subjekt*) is, but just a word should be said about Hegel's concept of 'substance' (*die Substanz*). 'Substance' has a wide denotation in Hegel's system. It can be regarded as 'being,' as 'thought,' or as 'nature' – but as *implicit*, i.e., as not yet differentiated, made concrete, articulated. Hegel, like Aristotle, regards substance in terms of *motion* (a substance which exists 'by nature' "has within itself a principle of motion," as Aristotle says [*Physics* 192^b15, 19]). Both Hegel and Aristotle view substance, the 'underlying nature' or 'substratum,' as potentiality which has an impulse to actualize itself. Thus it is the "innate impulse to change" within being, thought, and nature, that animates substance (v. PhS 10ff). And this "innate impulse to change" is nothing other than the 'subjectivity' inherent in substance.

25. This interpretation is warranted, I feel, by the 'Truth is Subjectivity' chapter of Kierkegaard's *Concluding Unscientific Postscript* (trans. David F. Swenson and Walter Lowrie [Princeton, 1974], pp. 169ff). He says there that "objectively, there is no truth for individuals, but only approximation" (p. 169).

26. Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (New York, 1962), H397. All further references to this work will be abbreviated as 'B&T'. The 'H' preceding page citations designates the pagination of the 8th edition, given in the margins by Macquarrie and Robinson.

27. Heidegger, B&T, H219.

28. Heidegger, B&T, H226, 227.

29. Heidegger, B&T, e.g., H297f.

30. See p. 25 below.

31. Heidegger, B&T, e.g., H297.

32. See Chapter Three, section 3.

33. Heidegger, B&T, e.g., H227, 229.

34. Some philosophers (Heidegger included) want to say that prior to human existence, the term 'truth' could have no meaning. But as an interpretation of Hegel this will not do. Hegel is sincere in saying that truth is eternal, and he takes this in the biblical sense of the *Logos* existing before the creation. See the following discussion, pp. 19–20.

35. See PhN §339 *Zusatz* #2: "Even if the earth was once in a state where it had no living things, but only the chemical process, . . ." In general, though, Hegel did not believe in the doctrine of "evolution out of chaos," or in a "process of differentiation [of species] appearing in time." Hence he writes that "the moment the lightning strikes into matter, at once there is present a determinate, complete creature, as Minerva fully armed springs forth from the head of Jupiter."

While there are several passages in Hegel's texts bearing witness to his influence by Schelling, who believed in an evolution of *Geist* from nature to man, from blind force to self-conscious mind, in general Hegel tended toward the doctrine that "mind is the absolute *prius*, . . . and [thus] nature is not the original positing agent, but is itself posited by mind" (PhM §381 *Zusatz*; and see SL §244). Thus while man may or may not have had a pre-history – I find Hegel ambiguous here – if he did, it seems to have been Hegel's preferred opinion that it was not nature, but solely the "eternal *Logos* of God before creation," that constituted this prehistory.

36. See also Psalms, Chapter 8.

37. Hegel explicitly makes this point several times (e.g., SL §128 *Zusatz*). Whatever we may think of his philosophy of nature, it is thus a misunderstanding to characterize it, as Alexandre Kojève does, as "absurd" and "paradoxical" because it "asserts that the world is the work of a Demiurge." Kojève, p. 146.

38. For further references to Hegel's doctrine of creation, see SL §§128 *Zusatz*, 163 *Zusatz*; HPh 1:75. For other interpretations of this doctrine, see Richard Kroner's Introduction to Hegel's *Early Theological Writings*, ed. T. M. Knox (Philadelphia, 1977), p. 60; Stanley Rosen, *Hegel: An Introduction to the Science of Wisdom* (New Haven and London, 1974), p. 47; H. S. Harris, in his Introduction and Notes to Hegel's *Difference* essay, pp. 22, 171n; and Emil Fackenheim, *The Religious Dimension in Hegel's Thought* (Chicago and London, 1967), pp. 103, 129–33, 148, 153, 201.

39. Pierre-Jean Labarrière, "La sursomption du temps et le vrai sens de l'histoire conçue," *Revue de métaphysique et de morale* 84 (1979): 93.

40. Hedwig, p. 153. This passage concludes Hedwig's article, and it is a very peculiar conclusion indeed, since it does not seem to be supported by his own analysis of Hegel's conception of eternity. For example, Hedwig argues forcefully that "eternity is never an abstraction [for Hegel], . . . it is no transcendence beyond time and history. Eternity is concrete. . . ." Eternity, he continues, "carries and preserves . . . within itself . . . the realities of work, art, religion, and philosophy," which are, after all, the products of *concrete spirit*, of historical *individuals*.

Perhaps the most sustained criticism of Hegel's purported neglect of concrete individuality (outside of Kierkegaard and Marx) may be found in Lukács' *The Young Hegel: Studies in the Relations between Dialectics and Economics* (Cambridge, 1975 [first published in 1938], passim, but especially Part IV). See also Serge Latouche, "Totalité, totalisation et totalitarisme," *Dialogue* 13 (1974): 72, 81. Latouche, echoing the traditional Marxist line, speaks of Hegel's "hypostasis" of spirit and a corresponding loss of lived history.

For defenses of Hegel against this charge, see Flay, pp. 250f; and Errol E. Harris, *An Interpretation of the Logic of Hegel* (New York, 1983), p. 21.

41. Hegel does not regard this as peculiar to the Greeks; he writes of Spinoza, for example, that "with him there is too much God" (HPh 3:282).

42. W. H. Werkmeister gives an impressive argument to show that the common criticism that "in Hegel's philosophy the empirical self, the human individual, is 'swallowed up' in the Absolute, . . . making human existence illusory" is completely unfounded. "Hegel's Phenomenology of Mind as a Development of Kant's Basic Ontology," in Darrel E. Christensen, ed., *Hegel and the Philosophy of Religion* (The Hague, 1970), p. 102.

43. See Heine's *Werke*, hrsg. von Ernst Elster (Leipzig, 1922), vol. 4, pp. 148f:

. . . ich habe hinter dem Maëstro [Hegel] gestanden, als er sie [die Musik des Atheismus] komponierte, freilich in sehr undeutlichen und verschnörfelten zeichen, damit nicht jeder sie entziffre - ich sah manchmal, wie er sich ängstlich umschaute, aus Furcht, man verstünde ihn.

44. Kojève, p. 259 (n. 41), and cf. pp. 145, 148. See also Lukács, pp. 462, 519; Robert Solomon, *In the Spirit of Hegel* (Oxford, 1985), pp. 638f; and Westphal, *History and Truth*, pp. 221-23. For views on the other side (that Hegel was not an atheist), see Quentin Lauer, *Essays*, p. 12 ("Hegel's philosophy will never be comprehended for what it is if it is not comprehended as essentially religious"); Stephen Crites, *In The Twilight of Christendom: Hegel vs. Kierkegaard on Faith and History* (Chambersburg, PA., 1972), pp. 41, 43; and J. Hutchinson Sterling, *The Secret of Hegel* (New York, 1898), p. xxii.

In an 1821 letter to Friedrich Creuzer (a colleague from Heidelberg), Hegel admits that "speculative philosophizing . . . permits of being led to

atheism," but only by those of "ill-will." *Hegel: The Letters*, trans. Clark Butler and Christiane Seiler (Bloomington, 1984), letter 389, p. 467.

45. Werkmeister, p. 102.

46. See Chapter Seven, section 5 below. See also F&K, *passim*, but esp. p. 64, where Hegel characterizes Kant, Fichte, and Jacobi together as presenting a "false idealism," i.e., "an idealism of the *finite*."

47. See Karl Barth, *Die protestantische Theologie im 19. Jahrhundert: Ihre Vorgeschichte und ihre Geschichte* (Zürich, 1952), p. 343, where he says that Hegel seeks a reconciliation of the individual and universal self-conscious, which, "*mit Gott schon darum nicht hadern, die schon darum weder offen noch heimlich atheistisch sein kann, weil sie als die eine wahre Vernunft des Menschen eo ipso auch Vernunft Gottes ist.*"

48. This passage shows clearly that Hegel's 'pantheism' is convertible into panlogism.

It is important to note that Hegel often offers harsh criticisms of pantheism (e.g., PhM §573; and see *Letters*, Numbers III, 301-16 and 576 [1812 and 1822], pp. 282, 535). The crux of this criticism is that pantheistic philosophies tend to characterize God in an entirely indeterminate way, whereas God must be viewed as fully determinate, i.e., *as existing in the world of finitude* (see e.g., HPh 2: 385-86; SL §147 *Zusatz*; PhS 471; LL 84).

As for the characterization of Hegel's philosophy as panlogistic, while this is a very common description (and was clearly common in Hegel's lifetime), Hegel was somewhat reluctant to accept it. See Butler's commentary to the *Letters*, pp. 5, 21, 477, 497, 541. But in none of the correspondence or texts that Butler cites does Hegel ever deny the basic principle that the *Logos* is immanent in the world rather than separate from it.

49. Marx, "Critique of Hegel's Doctrine of the State," in Benton and Livingstone, *Early Writings*, p. 61.

50. See Chapter Six for a fuller discussion of Hegel's theology.

51. See p. 164, n.5 above.

52. Jean Hyppolite, *Genèse et structure de la Phénoménologie de l'Esprit de Hegel* (Paris, 1946), p. 565.

Kojève says the same thing (see Kojève, Chapter 6, esp. pp. 166-68).

53. For other discussions of the transition from the *Phenomenology* to the *Logic*, see Malcolm Clark, *Logic and System: A Study of the Transition from "Vorstellung" to Thought in the Philosophy of Hegel* (The Hague, 1971), pp. 166-68; Friedrich Grimmlinger, "Zum Begriff des absoluten Wissens in Hegels *Phänomenologie*," in *Geschichte und System: Festschrift für Erich Heintel zum 60. Geburtstag*, hrsg. von Hans-Dieter Klein und Erhard Oeser (München, 1972), pp. 296f; E. E. Harris, *An Interpretation*, pp. 20-26; Jean Hyppolite, *Logique et*

Existence: Essai sur la Logique de Hegel (Paris, 1953), p. 247; Mitchell Miller, "The Attainment of the Absolute in Hegel's *Phenomenology*," *Graduate Faculty Philosophy Journal* 7 (1978): 214-16; Stanley Rosen, pp. 214f; Donald Phillip Verene, *Hegel's Recollection: A Study of Images in the Phenomenology of Spirit* (Albany, 1985), pp. 115ff; and Merold Westphal, *History and Truth*, pp. 224f.

54. Hyppolite, *Genèse*, p. 568.

55. Hyppolite, *Genèse*, p. 568; cf. pp. 569-70. As Hyppolite says, "*le jugement l'être est le néant* [v. LL 83f, 90ff], *ce n'est pas l'être lui-même qui le fait*" (p. 568).

Cf. Schelling (cited and translated by Jean Wahl in his "Hegel et Kierkegaard," *Revue Philosophique* 112 [1931]: 321-80): "*Ce n'est pas l'être qui se trouve être le rien, mais c'est moi qui trouve qu'il est le rien*" (p. 362n).

F. E. Abbot makes the same point, arguing that Hegel reifies abstract categories of thought such as 'being' and 'nothingness,' leaving out the thinker. Abbot, vol. 2, p. 217.

And cf. Ralph Barton Perry, *Present Philosophical Tendencies* (Westport, Connecticut, 1972), pp. 149, 181.

56. As Hegel says in his *Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts*, it is human consciousness which "*drückt den Begriff also solchen aus, . . . und der Begriff ist nur mit dieser Bestimmung Idee, Wahrheit*" (§279 *Anmerkung*).

57. Hyppolite himself refers to Hegel's "*image mystique*" (*Genèse*, p. 146). It is interesting to note in this regard that Hegel says that philosophy and mysticism have the same task – the overcoming of the finite – but that mysticism does not reach this supersession by rational thought, which is required of philosophy, but only through intuition or feeling (which are insufficiently discursive in Hegel's view) (v. SL§82 *Zusatz*).

58. An excellent discussion of this question – whether or not there is a *Logos* in history – is found in Isaiah Berlin's *The Hedgehog and the Fox* (New York, 1953).

59. Kant's *Logic*, trans. Robert Hartman and Wolfgang Schwartz (Indianapolis and New York, 1974), p. 13.

60. Hence, Tom Rockmore is right to point out that "the price Hegel pays," and pays gladly we may add, "for his philosophical approach to history is that he violates the Kantian dictum that regulative ideas can function as heuristic aids only," since for Hegel freedom (that towards which the *Logos* guides history) is "constitutive of the historical process." "Hegel on Epistemological Circularity and Certainty," *International Philosophical Quarterly* 22 (1982): 241.

61. For discussions of this point, see Hyppolite, *Genèse*, pp. 31ff; and Solomon, "Hegel's Concept of 'Geist,'" in Alasdair MacIntyre, ed., *Hegel: A Collection of Critical Essays* (Notre Dame and London, 1972), pp. 125-50 (see esp. pp. 124, 126, 129, 132, 148).

62. Marx, *Critique*, p. 220. See also *Critique*, p. 226; "On the Jewish Question," in Benton and Livingstone, ed., *Early Writings*, p. 234; *Manuscripts*, pp. 327, 329.

Marx, of course, felt that Hegel's theory of the state precluded the true emancipation of man from his particularity (which for Marx and Hegel always involves self-alienation) into his authentic species-being. Still, Marx entirely shares Hegel's basic assertion that it is only as a "universal self," a *Gattungswesen*, that man is truly actual.

63. Marx, *Manuscripts*, p. 351; and v. p. 327.

64. Marx, *Manuscripts*, p. 350. Cf. Hegel, PhS 251f, where he says that "ethical substance" – i.e., society – is "the action of the single individual and of all individuals, . . . the action of each and everyone, the essence which is the essence of all beings."

65. Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. Norman Kemp Smith (London, 1973), A106. Further references to this work will be abbreviated as 'CPR.' References to this and all other works of Kant, with the exception of his *Logic* (see p. 170, n. 59 above), refer to the standard Preussische Akademie pagination.

66. Cf. also Hegel's conception of the nature of *language*, which he says "expresses nothing but universality" (SL §20; v. PhS 60, 66, 308f, 395; and PhM §396 *Zusatz*). Compare Wittgenstein's arguments against a "private language."

67. This is supported by Hegel's assessment of the task of the *Phenomenology*. In the Preface to that work, which Hegel wrote after completing the body of the work, he says that "the task of leading the individual from his uneducated standpoint to knowledge had to be seen in its universal sense, just as it was the universal individual [*allgemeine Individuum*] . . . whose formative education had to be studied" (PhS 16).

68. Marx, *Jewish Question*, p. 226.

See Dieter Henrich, *Hegel im Kontext* (Frankfurt am Main, 1967), p. 197: "Marx [wishes to substitute] *ein anderes Subjekt als den Hegelschen Geist* . . . für den Gegensatz von Begriff und Welt" – namely, a "concrete" subject as opposed to the "mystificatory" subject that he feels the Hegelian *Geist* represents.

See also Lukács, p. 554: "Real history, according to Hegel, is thus made to depend on an abstract, imaginary, mystificatory 'bearer' which, it goes without saying, can only 'make' history in an abstract, imaginary, mystificatory fashion."

69. With regard to Kant, for example, Werkmeister shows that a fundamental goal of Hegel's recasting of Kantian ontology was to resolve the Kantian "diremption of the human being who, living in two worlds [the empirical and transcendental, the human and divine], can exist only in inner disharmony; whereas Hegel himself is interested in the re-affirmation of the 'unity of man.'" Werkmeister, p. 100.

70. Feuerbach, *The Essence of Christianity*, trans. George Eliot (New York, 1957), p. xxxvii.

71. Kierkegaard, *Postscript*, p. 194.

72. Barth, pp. 366–77.

73. Kant's *Logic* was published in 1800, four years before his death. The following quote is from p. 55 of the *Logic* (emphasis added).

74. Kant, *Logic*, p. 56; and v. CPR, B36, 83f.

75. Kant, *Logic*, p. 56.

It is important to note that Kant is speaking of formal, or logical, truth in this passage. Hence, strictly speaking it is only in regard to logical truth that Kant finds any "material" criterion – any correspondence criterion which would allow for our propositions to make ontological commitments – to be impossible. The "transcendental logic" of Kant's *Critique* does involve the applicability of pure concepts to objects (see CPR, B81–82), and in this sense allows for a "material" criterion of truth. But it is an odd criterion in that the objects which concepts refer to are phenomenal, not objects in themselves. Logic becomes *dialectical*, a "logic of illusion," when it applies concepts to objects themselves (as opposed to the merely phenomenal object): "for logic . . . lays down only the formal conditions of agreement with the understanding; and . . . these conditions can tell us nothing at all as to the objects concerned" (CPR, B86). Transcendental logic refers concepts to *Erscheinung*, and this means that the application of concepts to objects themselves is a *Logik des Scheins*. In this sense (i.e., in terms of the application of concepts to objects themselves) there is no material criterion of truth even in Kant's transcendental logic.

76. We will see in Chapter Three that Hegel does believe in the external world, and in the "influence on consciousness from without." But this "influence" is possible only because the object is not external in an extreme sense, where it would have no affinity with categories of thought. It is in this sense that Hegel says the external object is *implicitly*, or *potentially*, identical to our *Begriff* of it (see Chapter Three, pp. 61ff).

77. Kant, CPR, Bxxvi.

78. Cf. Sartre, *L'être et le néant*, 9^e édition (Paris, 1943), p. 11: "*Le dualisme de l'être et du paraître ne saurait plus trouver droit de cité en philosophie. . . [There is no] réel caché qui aurait drainé pour lui tout l'être de l'existant. Et l'apparence de son côté n'est pas une manifestation inconsistante de cet être.*"

79. Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, I, Q16, Art. 4, *Basic Writings of Saint Thomas Aquinas*, ed. Anton C. Pegis (New York, 1945). Cf. Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 1031^b20: "Each thing and its essence are one and the same; . . . and to know a thing is to know its essence."

80. See Hegel's 1822 letter to Edouard Duboc (a nonacademic philosopher in the Hegelian school), where he distinguishes his own correspondence theory of truth from the traditional one, and from Kant's. *Letters*, No. 422, pp. 492-94.

81. See CPR, Bxvi: "Hitherto it has been assumed that all our knowledge must conform to objects. But all attempts to extend our knowledge of objects by establishing something in regard to them *a priori*, by means of concepts, have, on this assumption, ended in failure. We must therefore make trial whether we may not have more success . . . if we suppose that objects must conform to our knowledge."

82. This sort of question recurs perpetually in Hegel's writings. Cf. PhS 242: "This is the notion which consciousness forms of itself. . . . Let us see whether this notion is confirmed by experience, and whether its reality corresponds to it."

83. In the original draft of my manuscript, I had included a lengthy discussion of the way in which Hegel's analysis of "sense-certainty" entails a prospective critique of modern empiricism, "sense-data" theory, "critical realism," and logical positivism, looking at the views of such philosophers as Bertrand Russell, G. E. Moore, A. J. Ayer, Carl Hempel, Rudolf Carnap, and Moritz Schlick to make good my argument. (One is even tempted to call this Hegel's *revenge* on modern empiricism, to borrow the term Robert Solomon uses in the title of his chapter on "Sense-Certainty: Hegel's Revenge (on Russell)" — *In the Spirit*, pp. 321ff.).

I have decided that this would be too much of a digression, but cannot resist citing a passage from Moritz Schlick's paper on "The Foundation of Knowledge" to show just how close the logical positivist view is to the criterion of truth that Hegel is so stridently criticizing in his "Sense-Certainty" chapter. Schlick writes of the "immediate sensation" which is to be the foundation of knowledge in such a way that it becomes virtually a mystical experience ("The Foundation of Knowledge," trans. David Rynin, in A. J. Ayer, ed., *Logical Positivism* [New York, 1959], pp. 226f):

Here everything depends on the characteristic of *immediacy* which is peculiar to observation statements, to which they owe . . . their value of absolute validity. . . . A genuine confirmation [of an observation statement] *cannot be written down*, for as soon as I inscribe the demonstratives "here," "now," they lose their meaning. . . . [Thus] cognition, like a flame, as it were, licks out to [these genuine confirmations, in immediate sensation], . . . reaching each but for a moment and then at once consuming it.

As we will see in our following discussion, nothing could be closer than this to Hegel's portrait of the inevitably self-deceiving character of sense-certainty.

A large amount has been written on Hegel's critique of "sense-certainty." Besides the work of Solomon just mentioned, some of the best commentaries are: Werner Becker, *Hegels Begriff der Dialektik* (Stuttgart, 1969), pp. 108-36 (Becker, however, finally sees Hegel as guilty of a play on words; but see Lauer, *A Reading*, p. 48); Flay, pp. 29-50 (Flay gives an especially fine analysis of the "natural attitude" and its role within the overall structure of the *Phenomenology*); Hyppolite, *Genèse*, pp. 81-99 (with an interesting digression on Parmenides, pp. 89-93); Howard P. Kainz, *Hegel's Phenomenology, Part I* (University, Alabama, 1976), pp. 61-64; Ytashaq Klein, "La Phénoménologie de l'esprit et le scepticisme," *Revue philosophique de Louvain*, 69 (1971): 373-77 (Klein argues that Hegel's analysis of "Meaning," a key feature of the "sense-certainty" section, is a hermeneutic principle that remains central to the entire *Phenomenology*); Pierre-Jean Labarrière, *Structures et mouvement dialectique dans la Phénoménologie de l'esprit de Hegel* (Paris, 1968), pp. 73-76; Lauer, *A Reading of Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit* (New York, 1976), pp. 41-52 (Lauer regards Hegel's analysis as accomplishing the "shattering of the empiricist dream" [p. 52]); Charles Taylor, "The Opening Arguments of the *Phenomenology*," in MacIntyre's *Hegel*, pp. 151-87 (Taylor attempts to show that Hegel is involved in a transcendental argument); and Verene, pp. 27-38 (Verene gives special emphasis to Hegel's metaphor of the Eleusinian Mysteries).

84. Kant, CPR, Bxxii'

85. Kant, CPR, B23.

86. See LL 777f: "But surely it is ridiculous to call this nature of self-consciousness, namely, that the I thinks itself, . . . an *inconvenience* and, as though there were a fallacy in it, a *circle*. It is [in] this relationship [of self to itself] . . . that self-consciousness . . . makes itself its own object. . . . A stone does not have this 'inconvenience'; when it is to be thought or judged it does not stand in its own way. It is relieved from the burden of making use of itself for this task; it is something outside it [i.e., the subject that thinks it or makes a judgment about it] that must give itself this trouble."

87. This whole topic of the "philosophic spectator" is the subject of my article, "Hegel on Metaphilosophy and the 'Philosophic Spectator,'" *Idealistic Studies* 16, no. 3 (1986): 205-17.

For other discussions of this topic, see Joseph Gauvin, "Le 'Für uns' dans la Phénoménologie de l'esprit," *Archives de Philosophie* 33, no. 4 (1970): 829-54; Quentin Lauer, *A Reading*, pp. 43-44; Lukács, pp. 474-76; and Otto Pöggeler, "Die Komposition der *Phänomenologie de Geistes*," *Hegel-Studien, Beiheft 3* (1966): 50-51.

88. That this thinking through of one's experience of the object is a "progressive uncovering" is important. It is wrong to regard Hegel's proposed criterion of truth as in any way an immediate algorithm for finding disparities between consciousness and its object. Unfortunately, Hegel himself gives

strength to this misunderstanding upon occasion. For example, in his *Phenomenology*, and later in his "shorter" *Logic* and again in his *Philosophy of Nature*, Hegel scorns Kant's epistemology by saying that "even animals are not excluded from the wisdom" that there is no final disparity between subject and object: "for animals do not just stand idly by in front of sensuous things as if these things possessed intrinsic being [i.e., completely apart from and independent of the subject which beholds them], . . . but fall to without further ceremony and eat them up" (PhS 65; SL §204 *Anmerkung*; PhN §246 *Zusatz*). Hegel is letting his wit get the better of him here, for this parable implies that the disparity between subject and object can be immediately bridged, "without further ceremony." But this is the very opposite of Hegel's serious view, which he repeats endlessly, that the opposition between subject and object can only be overcome through a long and laborious journey along the path of our experience, for "there is no easy-going way, and no royal road" to truth (PhS 43).

Chapter Three

1. This is the title given by Herman Nohl to his edition of the following works, published as *Hegels theologische Jugendschriften* (Tübingen, 1907): *The Life of Jesus* (1795), *The Positivity of the Christian Religion* (1795–1800), *The Spirit of Christianity and its Fate* (1798–1799), and the fragmentary manuscripts that Nohl called *Love* (1798) and *A Fragment of a System* (1800).

See T. M. Knox, trans. G. W. F. Hegel: *Early Theological Writings* (Philadelphia, 1977). Richard Kroner provides an excellent introduction to this book, situating Hegel's early writings within the context of his later philosophical development.

2. Kant, CPR, Bxxx.

3. Similar remarks abound in Kierkegaard's writings. See, for example, *Postscript*, pp. 334ff, and the many entries in his journals on the relation between philosophy and Christianity: *Soren Kierkegaard's Journals and Papers*, ed. and trans. Howard and Edna Hong, assisted by Gregor Malantschuk (London, 1975), vol. 3, sections 3245–85, 3315, 3317. In one epigrammatic entry, Kierkegaard suggests that "philosophy is life's dry-nurse, who can take care of us – but not suckle us" (section 3252).

4. In his *Difference* essay and in his *Faith and Knowledge*, both published in 1801, the year Hegel moved to Jena from his post as a family tutor in Frankfurt, and began co-editing the *Kritisches Journal der Philosophie* with Schelling.

5. As Hegel writes in his *Encyclopædia*, "[ultimately] an out-and-out other simply does not exist for mind" (PhM §377 *Zusatz*).

6. Hegel shares Aristotle's view that

scientific knowledge is not possible through the act of perception, . . . nor is seeing knowing. . . . For perception must be of a particular, whereas scientific knowledge involves the recognition of the universal. . . . But the universal one cannot perceive, since it is not 'this' and it is not 'now' (*Posterior Analytics* 87^b28–38, 88^a13–14).

Hegel goes to great lengths to show the impossibility of dissociating observations from theory, i.e., of cogently describing observation as devoid of any interpretive contribution of thought (see esp. PhS 139–210). Knowing demands the contribution of thought to things, the "recasting and transmuting of the phenomenal world into a universal [e.g., into law] – [only by this recasting can] the kernel [essence, law] within the shell of the sense-percept be brought to light" (SL §50).

7. "Thought" = "*das Denken*," which Hegel opposes to both sense-certainty (*sinnliche Gewißheit*) and perception (*die Wahrnehmung*). Thought *consciously* (while sense-certainty and perception only *un-consciously*) employs universal categories or concepts as contributory factors to the nature of the object of consciousness.

8. Kant, CPR, A126.

9. For further discussions of this passage from Hegel's Introduction, see Ardis B. Collins, "Hegel's Redefinition of the Critical Project," in Merold Westphal, ed., *Method and Speculation in Hegel's Phenomenology* (Atlantic Highlands, N.J., 1982), pp. 1–7; Dieter Jähnig, "Die Beseitigung der Geschichte durch 'Bildung' und 'Erinnerung,'" *Praxis* 7 (1971): 64; John Smith's classic discussion, "Hegel's Critique of Kant," *The Review of Metaphysics* 26, no. 3 (1973): 440–44; and Westphal, *History and Truth*, pp. 1–7.

10. However, see p. 179 (n. 35) below, for a remark on how this is misleading.

11. Kant, CPR, Bxx; and v. A42, B298.

12. *Adversus mathematicos*, VII, cited by Hegel in his *History of Philosophy* (2:321). As regards this $\pi\alpha\theta\omicron\sigma$, compare Kant, CPR, B154f, where he argues that the synthetic activity of our understanding directly "affects" (*affiziert*) the intuitional content of consciousness by its act (*Handlung*). Further, intuition itself "affects" its object, since its "forms" (space and time) are *a priori* representations in the mind (A24, A20), to which objects conform, rather than themselves conforming to objects (v. Bxvii).

13. "The Absolute" [*das Absolute*], like many other Hegelian terms, is used in a variety of ways. For example, it can have both a religious and a historical significance, since the Absolute is both the Christian God and the *Logos* unifying and guiding historical events (see Chapter Two). Hegel also speaks of the Absolute as signifying being and truth. Very generally, the epistemological significance of the Absolute is for Hegel, like Schelling, that it represents the

ultimate identity of subject and object, although (for Hegel at least – Hegel has his doubts about Schelling's sincerity on this point –) this is an "identity in difference." This "identity in difference" may be likened to the communion of man with Christ in the Eucharist, where there is a true unification of human and divine which yet preserves their difference.

For a concise discussion of Hegel's use of the term "absolute," see Quentin Lauer, *A Reading*, pp. 27f.

14. Hegel's point, developed in the first few pages of the Introduction, is that the Kantian project involves an unconvincing *reconstruction* of truth. That is, "what truly is" is abandoned – for it is never penetrated by our instrument of knowledge – and yet our cognition is still held to be true, for we set our sights lower than being (in itself) and readjust our notion of truth to the sphere of appearances.

15. Various commentators (e.g., H. S. Harris and W. T. Stace) have noted that Hegel's claim that Kant simply presupposes an ultimate barrier between subject and object is not without some support in Kant's own texts. The example most usually brought up is Kant's category of "modality," which does in fact seem to presuppose the nonidentity of subject and object. This is so because the principles of modality "restrict all the categories to their merely empirical employment," i.e., they have "a purely logical significance, expressing the form of *thought* . . . [without] referring to the possibility, actuality, or necessity of *things*" (CPR, B266f; and cf. B286). Hegel himself occasionally mentions this (e.g., SL §143), although his preferred analysis of what he takes to be the Kantian presupposition is more complex, having to do with what he sees as Kant's taking for granted that cognition is a medium or instrument – as well as Kant's identification of *alteration* of the object with *loss* of the object (in itself).

16. Westphal, *History and Truth*, p. 7. Westphal goes on to suggest that "a kind of psychoanalysis seems to be called for" to achieve the exorcism of this anxiety (compare Darrel Christensen, "Hegel's Phenomenological Analysis and Freud's Psychoanalysis," *International Philosophical Quarterly* 8 (1968): 356–78). Hegel, of course, eschews any psychological method of criticism for a phenomenological critique of the Kantian position.

17. Plato, *Phaedo* 65c.

18. On this whole topic, see Jean Hyppolite's article, "La critique hégélienne de la réflexion kantienne," *Kantstudien* 45 (1953–54): 83–95.

19. Wittgenstein, sections 257ff.

20. Kant, CPR, A244.

21. Kant, CPR, A239, 240.

22. There are unmistakable similarities between Hegel's arguments against Kant's *Ding an sich* and Berkeley's arguments against material

substance. In his *Dialogues Between Hylas and Philonous* (1713) (where Hylas represents Lockean realism and Philonous speaks for Berkeleyan idealism), Hylas says that "our faculties are too narrow and few" to know "the true and real nature of objects," and that "all we know is that we have ideas . . . in the mind . . . of the way objects *appear* to be." This could be Kant speaking. Philonous finds this doctrine to be the most "wild and extravagant" he can imagine, and to be based on a mere "dream of some unknown nature . . ." (in *The Empiricists*, [no editor listed] [Garden City, New York, (n.d.)], pp. 270-73; and cf. "Treatise Concerning the Principles of Human Knowledge," in Edwin A. Burt, ed., *The English Philosophers from Bacon to Mill* [New York, 1963], sections 85-88).

Berkeley explains the "extravagance" of this doctrine succinctly in his *Treatise*, where he says that the notion of the real existence of substance apart from the mind is "the very root of scepticism – for so long as men thought that real things subsisted without the mind, and that their knowledge was not so far *real* [insofar as it was not conformable to independently existing things], . . . it follows that they could not be certain they had any real knowledge at all. . . . All this scepticism follows from our supposing a difference between *things* and [our] *ideas*, and that the former have a subsistence without the mind. . . ." (in Burt, *English Philosophers*, sections 86-87). This is very close to the kind of argument Hegel offers against Kant.

An important *difference* between Hegel and Berkeley is that while Berkeley sometimes seems ambivalent about whether the notion of material substance is *self-contradictory* or simply *superfluous*, Hegel always suggests that the *Ding an sich* – so far as it is conceived as unknowable – is contradictory, the fantasized projection of a "void 'Beyond'" which is in fact "nothing in itself" (e.g., PhS 88, 205, 351-53).

We should note that in general Hegel held a rather unfavorable opinion of Berkeley. This is mainly because Hegel wishes to extend Berkeley's dictum that "to be is to be perceived" beyond perception to what Kant calls "ideas of reason." The being of things defined solely by perception is inadequate, and we need what Berkeley rejects as "abstract ideas" to fully define and explain the being of things.

23. See *Metaphysics* Book 1, Chapter 9.

24. Berkeley, *Treatise*, section 86.

25. This is why pure being in itself, which Hegel calls in his *Phenomenology* "*die leere Hülse des reinen Seins*" (Phän 428), is directly convertible with the category of "pure nothing" in Hegel's logic. Each expresses a total lack of determinateness or positive attributes. See Chapter Four, section 2 below.

26. Kant, CPR, A255.

27. Kant, CPR, A380.

28. Kant, CPR, e.g., B307.

29. For further discussion of Hegel's critique of the Kantian *Ding an sich*, see Harris, *An Interpretation*, pp. 63-72; John Smith, pp. 448f; Solomon, *In the Spirit*, pp. 295-302. For a defense of Kant against Hegel's criticisms, see Merold Westphal, "In Defense of the Thing in Itself," *Kantstudien* 59 (1968): 118-41.

30. See, e.g., Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation*, 2 vols., trans. E. F. J. Payne (New York, 1969), vol. 1, p. 95: "[T]o speak of a transcendental object forming the basis of representation . . . helps us not at all, for we do not know how to distinguish that object from the representation. We find that the two are one and the same. . . ."

31. Cited in Royce, *The Spirit of Modern Philosophy* (Boston, 1893), p. 164. Royce's translation: "Notice! The late metaphysic is dead without heirs, and tomorrow/All the things in themselves shall under the hammer be sold."

32. Cf. SL §60 *Anmerkung*: "No one knows . . . that anything is a limit or defect, until he is at the same time above and beyond it."

33. Goethe's *Zur Morphologie*, vol. I, Part 3; cited in Hegel's PhN §246 *Zusatz*; and partially in his SL §140, and Diff. 112. The "sixty years" presumably means simply that Goethe had heard this claim all his life (he wrote this verse in 1820, and was born in 1749).

34. Kant, CPR, B295.

35. Actually, this way of putting it is misleading, for in Hegel's absolute idealist system these two things coincide. Since Hegel says that the truth of the object is the "thing thought," he cannot disparage our thought *about* the world as a criterion of truth (even though he sometimes seems to). Hegel's point is better put by saying that we cannot dissociate knowledge of our thought about reality from knowledge of reality itself.

36. Grimmlinger, pp. 291f.

37. Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 1072^b20-21. Incidentally, Hegel cites this passage from Aristotle as the final coda to his *Encyclopædia* (PhM §577).

Plato expresses much the same thought in a more poetic manner: "It is the nature of the real lover of knowledge to strive emulously for true being. . . . His desire will not flag till he *comes into touch* with the nature of each thing in itself by that part of his soul to which it belongs to lay hold on that kind of reality by virtue of its affinity with it" (*Republic* 490b).

38. As Moritz Schlick puts it, the aim of arriving at "basic propositions" or "observation statements" confirmed by immediate sensation is to achieve "an absolutely fixed point of contact between knowledge and reality" (in Ayer, *Positivism*, p. 226).

Hegel himself calls attention to the fact that "this principle is the same as that which has in the present day been termed . . . immediate knowledge" (SL §7 *Anmerkung*).

39. On Hegel's criteriology, see Collins, in *Method and Speculation*, pp. 3-7; Kenley Royce Dove, "Hegel's Phenomenological Method," in Warren E. Steinkraus, *New Studies in Hegel's Philosophy* (New York, 1971), p. 35; and Solomon, *In the Spirit*, pp. 307-11.

40. Kenley Royce Dove goes so far as to argue that "the wealth of human experience actually described in the *Phenomenology* is a most eloquent demonstration that Hegel's method is far more 'empirical' than that of the philosophers who call themselves 'empiricists'" (in Steinkraus, pp. 41f).

In general, Hegel believed that strict empiricism was a one-sided form of inquiry, unable to penetrate to the genuine conceptual structures of reality. In a somewhat whimsical (but for all that, quite typical) reference to empiricism in a letter to Friedrich Niethammer (who appointed Hegel Rector and Professor of Philosophical Preparatory Sciences at Nuremberg in 1808), Hegel writes: "Experience has proven it [they say] – experience, the empirical! You know! And proven what? That potatoes, horseradish, teapots, energy-saving ovens, etc., all prospered well where the sciences flourished" (*Letters*, No. 102 [1807], p. 136). Even of Goethe, who Hegel admired greatly, he writes (of Goethe's work on color): "he adheres completely to the empirical, instead of going beyond . . . to the concept which will perhaps only get to shimmer through" (*Letters*, No. 90 [to Schelling, 1807], p. 77).

41. Feuerbach, *Sämtliche Werke* (Leipzig, 1846-90), vol. 2, pp. 326f; cited and trans. by Eugene Kamenka, *The Philosophy of Ludwig Feuerbach* (New York, 1969), pp. 70f.

42. See Feuerbach, *Sämtliche Werke*, vol. 2, p. 362f; and Kierkegaard, *Postscript*, pp. 267-82 (and *passim*).

43. Merleau-Ponty, p. 63.

44. See, e.g., SL §82 *Zusatz*, where Hegel says that the aim of speculative logic involves the "realization" and "translation" of subjective categories of thought into objective categories of being. See also SL §24, where he says that "logic coincides with metaphysics," i.e., with ontology, for it shows that "thoughts . . . express the essential reality of things."

45. Marx, "Theses on Feuerbach," #XI, in Benton and Livingstone, *Early Writings*.

On this point, see Elena Panova, "The Identity of Logic, Epistemology, and Ontology in Hegel and in Marxism," *Hegel-Jahrbuch* (1975): 501-5.

46. Marx, "Letters from the Franco-German Yearbooks," in Benton and Livingstone, *Early Writings*, pp. 208f.

47. Hence, Karl Barth is mistaken to say that Hegel provides us with "*eine Denkregel, der zufolge es Rätsel nur gibt, um alsbald von oben eingesehen und aufgelöst zu werden*" (Barth, p. 364).

48. This is Hegel's paraphrase of Genesis 3: 14–24.

49. "Philosophische Briefe über Dogmatismus und Kritizismus," in *Werke*, hrsg. von Manfred Schröter (München, 1972ff), vol. 1, p. 237.

50. Schopenhauer, vol. 2, p. 289. The term "objectivity" suffered a certain loss of clarity and distinctness at the hands of Kant. For Kant, *epistemological* "objectivity" amounts to universal and necessary knowledge of phenomena – which he provides for with his "Copernican Revolution." Schopenhauer is not using the term "objectivity" in this sense, however, but in a more usual way. That is, Kant "vitiates all objectivity" both *epistemologically*, in that it is solely due to the forms of intuition and categories of the understanding of the *subject* that phenomenal objects are known, and *ontologically*, in that the object in itself transcends all possible experience.

51. For the relation between consciousness and self-consciousness, see Flay, pp. 80, 170, 228; Hyppolite, *Genèse*, pp. 68–70, 139–50; Labarrière, *Structure et mouvement*, pp. 76–80; and Herbert Marcuse, *Reason and Revolution: Hegel and the Rise of Social Theory* (Boston, 1969), pp. 112f.

52. It is true that from one perspective self-consciousness is but a stage in the path towards Absolute Knowledge in the *Phenomenology*, and, like all preliminary stages, is sublated by a higher stage (specifically, that of Reason). But from another perspective, we may note that Hegel describes Absolute Knowledge as "the reconciliation of consciousness with self-consciousness," a "unification" which "closes the series of the shapes of Spirit" (PhS 482f). To be as accurate as possible, perhaps we should not say that the transition from realism to idealism is effected by the simple transition from consciousness to self-consciousness, but rather is reached through the dialectic of Reason which culminates in the absolute standpoint where consciousness and self-consciousness have become united.

53. Fichte, *Wissenschaftslehre*, p. 429. Actually, Fichte feels that we *can* choose between realism and idealism, but only on *moral* grounds. He claims that realism implies fatalism while idealism preserves freedom of the will (pp. 431f), and that "idealism is the only possible philosophy" in view of its superior moral consequences (p. 439). The pragmatists also counsel us to choose between competing systems on the basis of moral (and other practical) value considerations – although their choice is not always the same as Fichte's.

54. See William Marshall Urban, *Beyond Realism and Idealism* (London, 1949).

55. Schopenhauer, vol. 2, pp. 4, 5.

56. Hans Reichenbach, *The Rise of Scientific Philosophy* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1951), p. 254; and cf. pp. 32, 66, 269.

57. This term was given by the "New Realists" to the quagmire they saw idealism condemned to with its claim that we cannot eliminate the contribution of thought from the object. If this is so, the argument runs, then there would be no way to know objects, but only our thought about objects. Hence, we could never know anything about the independently existing world. See R. B. Perry, *Tendencies*, pp. 128-32, 313; and Perry, "The Ego-Centric Predicament," *Journal of Philosophy* 7 (1910): 5-14.

58. See Kant's *Prolegomena to any Future Metaphysics*, trans. Lewis White Beck (Indianapolis and New York, 1950), Akad, 288-89, 374. All further references to this work will be abbreviated as 'Prol.'

59. Kant, Prol, 289.

60. Kant, *Critique of Judgement*, trans. J. C. Meredith (Indianapolis, 1956), 42f (henceforth 'CJ').

61. Kant, CPR, Bxli (n), B275-79.

62. Cf. also Husserl and Fichte, who seek to show that there is a fallacy behind supposing that representation begs the question, "representation of *what?*" in such a way that the "what" must be an external cause. For Husserl, the object of representation "is the title for essential connections of consciousness" — that is, "in the extended sense of the term an object . . . is 'constituted' within certain connections of consciousness " (*Ideas*, trans. W. R. Boyce Gibson [New York, 1967], pp. 371, 348). Fichte says the same thing: "The thing comes into being through an action [of consciousness] in accord with laws, and is nothing else but the totality of these relations unified by the imagination, so that all these relations together constitute the thing" (*Wissenschaftslehre*, p. 443).

63. See, e.g., Kant, CPR, B280, B289, B294.

64. See Kant, CPR, B275-79.

65. See Kant, CPR, A34ff.

66. Kant, CPR, A383.

67. Schopenhauer, vol.1, p. 447; and see the whole Appendix on "Criticism of the Kantian Philosophy" (vol. 1, pp. 413-534).

68. Schopenhauer, vol.2, p. 3 and passim.

69. Kojève, pp. 152, 154, 156, 158.

70. Kojève, pp. 152, 156, 158.

See also John Smith, p. 449. Smith is careful, however, to qualify his characterization of Hegel as a "thorough-going realist" by showing that it is only in respect of his rejection of the unknowable *Ding an sich* – so that our knowledge encompasses more than "mere" appearance – that this characterization holds true.

71. This does seem unfair to Kant, insofar as he explicitly states that the "matter" of knowledge is given by sensation and only its "form" is given "a priori in the mind" (CPR, B34). Hegel's point is perhaps that rightly understood, Kant's position reduces to representationalism and hence cannot account for any "givenness" of external objects.

72. See, e.g., Phän 39: Knowledge first involves the self-alienation of consciousness "*und dann aus dieser Entfremdung zu sich zurückgeht*"; Phän 52: "*Das Wissenschaftliche Erkennen erfordert, sich dem Leben des Gegenstandes zu übergeben. . . . Aber in die Materie versenkt, kommt es in sich zurück, aber nicht eher als darin, daß die Erfüllung oder der Inhalt sich in sich zurücknimmt*"; and PhM §442: "*Das Fortschreiten des Geistes ist Entwicklung, . . . [der] Übergang in die Manifestation und Rückkehr in sich*."

73. See Chapters Four and Five for a full discussion of this circular teleology, which is the animating principle of Hegel's epistemology.

74. Kojève, p. 150.

Stanley Rosen makes the point that Hegel's idealism "rejects any solution . . . [to the problem of knowledge and the existence of the external world] which transforms objects into 'ideas' or 'thoughts'" (*An Introduction*, p. 48). And J. N. Findlay says that Hegel's "so-called absolute idealism . . . is not the belief that all things exist only in and for a consciousness" (*Hegel: A Reexamination* [New York, 1976], p. 16). Findlay, however, goes on to say that we cannot understand Hegel's assertion that "spirit is the truth of everything" *metaphysically* (p. 16). This I think is wrong. Spirit or mind is the metaphysical reality of the world, although it does not exclude the initial externality of the world in the knowledge-relation.

Chapter Four

1. See also PhS 488: "Substance is charged, as subject, with the . . . necessity . . . of exhibiting itself as spirit. . . . Until [substance] has completed itself in itself, until it has completed itself as world-spirit, it cannot reach its consummation as self-conscious spirit."

2. Of the three forms of substance that Aristotle recognizes – the "perishable sensible" (material things), the "eternal sensible" (the heavens), and the "immovable, eternal and insensible" (the prime mover) (v. *Metaphysics* 1069^a30–34) – both of the eternal substances lack characteristics which are

present in finite substances. (1) Only mortal substances involve generation; (2) eternal sensible substance involves only "minimal motion"; and (3) in the case of unchangeable substance, there is no motion of, but only *by* that substance, and there is no potentiality (since there is no matter) (v. *Metaphysics* Book 12, Chapter 6).

3. See, e.g., *Generation and Corruption* 321^b21, 322^a28.

4. See *Physics* 192^a30 and ^b28; *Generation and Corruption* 319^a20, 320^a3; *Metaphysics* 983^a30, 1033^a10. Aristotle, however, is not always consistent on this point. "Substratum," or "underlying nature" (v. *Physics* 189^a29, 35, 190^a15), sometimes denotes the "logical subject of predication" (e.g., *Metaphysics* 1017^b24), and sometimes the *combination* of matter and form, (e.g., *Physics* 190^a33–^b16). Still, I think it is fair to say that Aristotle's most usual definition of the substratum is in terms of matter.

5. Hegel sometimes speaks of these contrasting aspects of substance in terms of form and matter, as does Aristotle (e.g., SL §128 & *Zusatz*, 129). "Matter" at other times becomes "content," as when Hegel says that "the process of development" from the "implicit to the explicit" nature of a thing involves the "alteration of form without making any addition in point of content" (SL §161 *Zusatz*; cf. also PhS 81; PhM §383 *Zusatz*; SL §24 *Zusatz*). This follows Aristotle's analysis of form and substratum – where the substratum does not alter but the form or shape does. Finally, Hegel sometimes just contrasts substance with subject, although this is somewhat misleading, since "subject," like Aristotle's "form," is not strictly speaking *separable* from substance for Hegel, as it was in the case of the Platonic "eidos."

6. Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 1069^b14–16.

7. Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 1013^a18–22; *Physics* 193^b5.

8. Aristotle, *Parts of Animals* 639^b15.

9. Aristotle, *Parts of Animals* 640^a12–25.

10. See, e.g., PhS 488, where Hegel says that "spirit has completed itself" only when substance has fulfilled the process of "exhibiting itself" as subject.

11. Aristotle, *Physics* 192^a22.

12. For other discussions of Hegel's debt to Aristotle (specifically, with regard to the concepts of substance and hyle-morphism, *dynamis* and *energia*), see Werner Beierwaltes, *Platonismus und Idealismus* (Frankfurt am Main, 1972), p. 166; Findlay, pp. 216f, 248; E. Harris, *An Interpretation*, pp. 54, 176f, 190–91, 204; Marcuse, *Hegel's Ontology*, pp. 42–43, 91, 103–4; Marcuse, *Reason and Revolution*, pp. 40f; Rosen, *An Introduction*, p. 143; and Westphal, *History and Truth*, p. 122.

13. Leibniz's "Correspondence with DesBosses" in L. E. Loemker, ed., *Philosophical Papers and Letters of Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz* (Dordrecht, Holland, 1969), p. 599.

14. Leibniz, *Monadology*, section 10, in Loemker.

15. Leibniz's "Correspondence with DeVolder," in Loemker, p. 535.

16. Leibniz, *Nouveaux essais*, C. J. Gerhardt, ed., *Die Philosophischen Schriften von G. W. Leibniz* (Berlin, 1882), vol. 5, pp. 150-53.

17. Although "conatus" or "impulsion" is strictly speaking only one aspect of force for Leibniz – it is the "beginning and end of motion" that is the "principle of the striving" of substance (*Theory of Abstract Motion*, in Loemker, p. 140). Leibniz also speaks of a "passive force," which is basically *inertia* (*Specimen Dynamicum*, in Loemker, pp. 436f; *On Nature Itself*, in Loemker, p. 503; "DeVolder," in Loemker, p. 531).

18. See *Système nouveau*, in Gerhardt, vol. 4, p. 472; *New System*, in Loemker, section 3; *Nouveaux essais*, in Gerhardt, vol. 5, pp. 150-53.

19. "Correspondence with Arnauld," in Loemker, p. 360; "DeVolder," in Loemker, p. 516; *Principles of Nature and Grace*, in Loemker, sections 1, 2, 3; *New System*, in Loemker, section 3.

20. *New System*, in Loemker, section 3.

21. *Système nouveau*, in Gerhardt, vol. 4, p. 472.

22. *Monadology*, section 14.

23. *Nouveaux essais*, in Gerhardt, vol. 5, pp. 151-53.

24. "Arnauld," in Loemker, p. 339.

25. See *Monadology*, section 7; *New System*, section 15; *Discourse on Metaphysics*, in Loemker, section 14.

26. "Arnauld," in Gerhardt, vol. 2, p. 43; "Arnauld," in Loemker, p. 339.

27. *First Truths*, in Loemker, p. 268.

28. Further references to Hegel's relation to Leibniz may be found in Findlay, pp. 165-67, 210 (on atomism and substance); Flay, p. 65 (on force); and Harris, pp. 177, 204, 220, 263, 317 (on teleology, pure act, substance, and the principle of development).

29. See Heraclitus's "Fragments," in Milton C. Nahm, ed., *Selections from Early Greek Philosophy* (New York, 1934), Fragments 20, 22, 26.

30. See *Fragments*, #59: "From all things arises the one, and from the one all things arise; . . . thou shouldst unite all things. . . ."

31. Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 1069^b13.
 32. See Fichte, *Wissenschaftslehre*, pp. 121, 142, 443.
 33. See Fichte, *Wissenschaftslehre*, pp. 115, 117, 215, 217, 270. And cf. Hegel, HPh 3:491f; Diff 53, 55, 59.
 34. Other comparisons of Hegel and Heraclitus on the nature of becoming may be found in Findlay, p. 48; E. Harris, *An Interpretation*, pp. 97f, 204; Rosen, *An Introduction*, pp. 24–25; and Andries Sarlemijn, *Hegelsche Dialektik* (Berlin, 1971), pp. 32–34.
 35. Karl Popper, *Conjectures and Refutations* (New York, 1965), p. 327.
 36. Reichenbach, pp. 69f.
 37. Parmenides, "On Truth," in Nahm, ed., *Selections*, pp. 116f.
 38. Parmenides, "On Truth," pp. 116f.
 39. Abbot, vol. 2, p. 210.
 40. Hegel's reference to the hundred dollars is a jab at Kant's criticism of the ontological proof for the existence of God (Kant, CPR, B620ff). Hegel discusses this criticism in the section on "being" in his "larger" *Logic* (and cf. HPh 3:452), and his basic point is that Kant confuses – or rather simply conflates – the categories of being (*Sein*) and determinate being or existence (*Dasein*) (LL 86ff). Hegel writes: "When it is urged against the unity of being and nothing that it is nevertheless not a matter of indifference whether anything [the hundred dollars in this case] is or is not, we practice the deception of converting the difference between whether I *have* or *have not* the hundred dollars into a difference between being and non-being – a deception based . . . on the one-sided abstraction which ignores the determinate being (*Dasein*) present in such examples and holds fast merely to being (*Sein*) and non-being; just as, conversely, the abstraction of being and nothing which should be apprehended is transformed into a definite being and nothing, into a determinate being."
 41. Adolf Trendelenburg was the first to criticize Hegel for illegitimately introducing time, or real change, into mere logical becoming. *Die Logische Frage in Hegels System* (Leipzig, 1843).
 42. J. M. E. McTaggart, *Commentary on Hegel's Logic* (Cambridge, 1910), pp. 17–21.
- W. T. Stace takes issue with McTaggart here. In his *Philosophy of Hegel* (New York, 1955), Stace says that "Dr. McTaggart thinks that a deduction of *change* would not be valid [in the section of Hegel's *Logic* on "Becoming"]. [But] whether the deduction is valid or not, . . . that Hegel *intended* to deduce change seems to me indisputable" (p. 138n). But Stace is perhaps not entirely understanding McTaggart's point here. Stace himself says that "being and nothing pass into each other *logically*, not one after the other in time," and cau-

tions us not to confuse the category of "mere empty being" with "concrete existence" (p. 138). This is essentially all that McTaggart is saying, and he points out that Hegel himself says that this is not enough to get us "concrete change" (McTaggart, pp. 17ff).

McTaggart, however, believes that "real change" is not even a characteristic of Hegel's category of determinate being (*Dasein*) (p. 20), and this does seem to be mistaken. For while it is true that Hegel does not introduce the category of "development" (*die Entwicklung*) until the beginning of the third Subdivision of his "shorter" *Logic* (development is not a category per se of the "larger" *Logic*), this in no way means that real change does not arise until we reach this stage of the *Logic*. For, as McTaggart himself points out, determinate being "contains as an element, not nothing, but negation" (p. 20), and negation, as we shall see in section 3 below, simply cannot be understood apart from real change. Negativity is precisely what accounts for the dialectical impulse to self-transcendence in things (v. SL §116 *Anmerkung*). The fact that *die Entwicklung* does not appear as a category of the *Logic* until we reach the section on the "*Begriff*" means only that we cannot understand the full significance of change until we understand it as the teleological development of concepts or notions. But again, this is very different from saying that real change does not itself arise until we have this understanding.

43. McTaggart, p. 18.

44. I think this is Sartre's point as well when he writes that "*l'être pur et le non-être pur seraient deux abstractions dont la réunion seule serait à la base de réalités concrètes*" (Sartre, p. 47).

45. It is important to note that contradiction also has an ontological significance for Hegel, which arises when we consider concrete existents. This ontological contradiction is not as mild as the sort of contradiction Hegel speaks of as applying to the "merely logical" categories of being and nothing.

46. The argument of the transitions from Being to Nothing to Becoming in the *Logic* has been the source of much controversy. For several of the main commentaries, see Clark, pp. 75-79; Findlay, pp. 153-59; Harris, *An Interpretation*, pp. 95-100; Henrich, pp. 77-79 (and Chapter 3, "Anfang und Methode der Logik," passim); G. R. G. Mure, *A Study of Hegel's Logic* (Oxford, 1950), pp. 32-44; Michael Rosen, *Hegel's Dialectic and its Criticism* (Cambridge, 1982), pp. 143-52; and Taylor, *Hegel*, pp. 277, 232.

47. Hence, the criticism by people such as R. B. Perry that absolute idealism involves a "leveling tendency" which renders differences or distinctions "of no account," is completely mistaken (see Perry, *Tendencies*, p. 190). Hegel himself writes that "if reason be reduced to mere identity without diversity, it will also win a happy release from contradiction at the slight sacrifice of all its facets and contents" (SL §48 *Anmerkung*).

48. As Sartre says, "*le néant . . . c'est au sein même de l'être en son coeur, comme un ver*," in the sense that the thing is a synthesis of negative and positive in which the "intrastructure" of being is "*habitée par une condition nécessaire* [of its] . . . existence" (Sartre, p. 57). Sartre's whole analysis of being and nothingness relies heavily on Hegel – much more heavily than he admits.

49. Reichenbach, p. 68.

50. Royce, *Modern Philosophy*, p. 226.

51. For references to some of the major discussions of the Hegelian dialectic, see *Hegel-Jahrbuch* (1974), which is entirely devoted to the concept of dialectic (Köln, 1975); Becker, *passim*; Findlay, pp. 58–82; Flay, pp. 17–28; Errol E. Harris, "Dialectic and Scientific Method," *Idealistic Studies* no. 3 (1973): 1–17; E. Harris, *An Interpretation*, pp. 29–34, 40–42; Martin Heidegger, *Hegel's Concept of Experience* (New York, 1970), pp. 113–22; Marcuse, *Reason and Revolution*, pp. 146ff, 157ff, 238ff; M. Rosen, pp. 75–76, 161–63; S. Rosen, *An Introduction*, pp. 266–80; Sarlemijn, *passim*; Solomon, *In the Spirit*, pp. 215–20, 228–35, 267–73; Taylor, *Hegel*, pp. 131–37, 216–21, 225–31.

52. I am not convinced by those commentators who claim that Hegel's method is not dialectical at all (see especially Dove, in Steinkraus, pp. 34f; and Walter Kaufmann, *Hegel: Reinterpretation, Texts and Commentary* [Garden City, N.Y., 1966], pp. 160–62). The argument seems to be that for Hegel dialectic is a characteristic of *reality* rather than a scientific tool for deciphering it. But, as I have stressed throughout this book, Hegel insists that thought and being cannot be ultimately separated, and a corollary of this is that "in every other science the subject matter and the scientific method are distinguished from each other," while in speculative philosophy they coincide (LL 43; and see Chapter Five, pp. 96ff, below). For a persuasive rebuttal of the Dove/Kaufmann claim, see Grimminger, pp. 291–92. See also the next two quotes (from PhS 40 and SL §81), both of which seem hard to reconcile with the portrait of Hegel's method as nondialectical.

53. "The Idea" (*die Idee*) is Hegel's term for the unity of thought and being, or subject and object, and as such is identical with truth (v. SL §§212 & *Zusatz*; 213 & *Anmerkung*). But again, this unity is not simply self-identical, for "the idea itself is the *dialectic* which forever divides and distinguishes the self-identical from the differentiated, the subjective from the objective, . . ." (SL §214 *Anmerkung*).

54. This conviction of Hegel's of the necessity of opposition or negativity for a fulfilling life is the source of his famous dictum that "the history of the world is not the theater of happiness; periods of happiness are blank pages in it, for they are periods of harmony, where opposition is in abeyance" (PhH 26f).

55. Cf. also SL §119 *Anmerkung*: "Positive and negative are supposed to express an absolute difference. The two however are at bottom the same, . . .

For in opposition, the different is not confronted by just any other, but by its other." The other, the negative, is thus essential to the definition of the thing, and so is at once positive.

56. The nonidentity of consciousness and object is a *contradiction* for Hegel because truth is the identity of subject and object, and this identity is implicit all along (whether consciousness ever grasps the truth of its object or not), so that the disparity between subject and object contradicts this implicit identity.

57. Kojève, p. 224.

58. Kant, CPR, Bxv; Prol, pp. 332, 351, 367.

59. Kierkegaard, *Postscript*, v. pp. 169, 262, 279, 375f.

60. Kierkegaard, *Postscript*, p. 99.

61. Kierkegaard, *Postscript*, p. 262.

62. See Kierkegaard, *Concept of Dread*, trans. Walter Lowrie (Princeton, 1973), p. 32; *The Last Years: Journals 1853–55*, ed. and trans. Ronald Gregor Smith (London, 1965), pp. 247, 332; *Postscript*, pp. 123, 279f, 357.

63. G. J. Stack, *Kierkegaard's Existential Ethics* (Alabama, 1977), pp. 46f.

64. C. D. Schrag, "Kierkegaard's Existential Reflection on Time," *Personalist* 42 (1961): 159.

65. Kierkegaard's assertion that becoming must be in the form of a *leap* seems to be in more danger of failing to account for transition than Hegel's theory, in my view. It suggests that there is no sufficient reason, or ground, or cause, for the transition *internal* to the being which leaps. If becoming is a "*breach of immanence*," so that the motive for development is not immanent in the thing, then the motivation or impulse of becoming must be external to the thing. But this is precisely "the external necessity of a dreadful fate or destiny" that Hegel talks about (PhS 279). Hegel himself *does* view dialectic as a breach, an "inward breach," and "schism" of substance (SL §24 *Zusatz*), but this must be immanently motivated, arising from an impulse within the substance, else it would doom the substance to the weight of external necessity. Kierkegaard's texts, as far as I know, never indicate that he was aware of the distinction that Hegel makes between "merely external" and "real inward" necessity (SL §35 *Zusatz*), and, as such, Kierkegaard's assessment of Hegel's dialectic is highly misleading.

Not only that, but Kierkegaard's description of transition as a "leap" and "breach of immanence" is highly misleading in terms of his own philosophy. In his *Concept of Dread*, for example, Kierkegaard writes that "the annulment (*Aufhebung*) of immediacy is an *immanent* movement within immediacy" (p. 33). Indeed this must be so for Kierkegaard's "existential" dialectic, for authentic becoming – which Kierkegaard almost exclusively describes as it

applies to human consciousness as opposed to natural substances – is always based on a decision of the self made in the "isolation of his [or her] inwardness" (*Postscript*, p. 68n; and v. pp. 71, 128, 182ff, 212, 218, 223, 232, 248, 264n, 389, 455ff). The category of the leap refers *not* to a breach of this internal motivation of self-development, but to the fact that there may be no sufficient reason or ground for the decision *outside* of the self. This is why decision is called an "objective uncertainty" by Kierkegaard (e.g., *Postscript*, p. 182), but it is nevertheless a *subjective truth*, precisely because the (authentic) decision is motivated immanently, i.e., by the self alone in "internal solitude."

66. Hegel's theory of contradiction has been much discussed. It is a central point of focus in most Marxist commentaries (for example, both Kojève and Hyppolite dwell on it throughout their works). For other examinations, see Becker, pp. 11, 26, 28, 43, 64 (Becker traces the concept of contradiction through various categories and strategies of the *Logic*); Findlay, pp. 25–26, 63–66, 76–79, 192–95; S. Rosen, *An Introduction*, pp. 20, 22, 23, 89–92 (Rosen includes a full chapter comparing Hegel's theory of contradiction to those of Plato and Aristotle); Sarlemijn, pp. 95–113 (Sarlemijn situates the theory of contradiction within the larger theme of Hegel's dialectic and relates it to the concepts of the *Aufhebung*, *Verstand*, and the critique of formal logic); and Taylor, *Hegel*, pp. 105–9, 225–31, 233–39.

67. Two important discussions of Hegel's thought on scepticism are Ytashaq Klein's "*La Phénoménologie de l'esprit et le scepticisme*" and Thomas R. Webb's "Scepticism and Hegelian Science," *Dialogue* 16 (1977): 139–62. In addition, Jean Hyppolite's discussion of the "Scepticism" section of the *Phenomenology* remains one of the best concise analyses of Hegel's anatomy of ancient scepticism (*Genèse*, pp. 178–83).

68. Clark Butler, the editor of Hegel's *Letters*, relates that at a tea party given by Goethe for Hegel in the fall of 1827, "Hegel spoke [according to another guest, Johann Eckermann] of dialectic as the 'methodically cultivated spirit of contradiction which lies within everyone as an innate gift which is especially valuable for discerning truth from falsehood.' Goethe replied that he feared such skill might be used to turn falsehood into truth and truth into falsehood. But Hegel would grant this only in the case of the mentally deranged" (*Letters*, p. 711). Hegel might well have granted this possibility for the sceptic as well, and indeed his description of scepticism in the *Phenomenology* implies a sort of mental derangement: "this consciousness . . . is in fact nothing but a purely casual, confused medley, the dizziness of a perpetually self-engendered disorder," a "restless confusion" and "a lost consciousness" (PhS 124f).

69. The *understanding* is for Hegel that mode of thought which is analytic in the sense of "taking and holding apart," distinguishing and fixing the determinations of things and of thought (v. PhM §467 *Zusatz*; Diff 90; SL §80). "It pertains to the standpoint of the understanding," then, "to divide and to

distinguish, and to maintain the finite thought-determinations in their opposition" (HPh 3:521). This method of analysis regards distinctions as exclusive (HPh 1:26), so that it is perpetually iterating the phrase "either . . . or," and never "both . . . and." A thing is either one or many, either free or necessary, either matter or mind, but not both the one and the other. The understanding is the mode of thought employed by Goethe's philosopher who, in analyzing things, "cancels the living spirit out," leaving their parts lying about his laboratory without their "living link" (*Faust*, Part I, Scene 4).

Reason, on the other hand, is ultimately synthetic, for while it sees the oppositions to things, it "demands that these should be brought together" (HPh 3:521). "The sole interest of reason is to suspend such rigid antitheses" (*solche festgewordene Gegensätze aufzuheben*) as the understanding produces (Diff 90). This does not mean that reason is indifferent to opposition, for "life eternally forms itself by setting up oppositions" (Diff 91). No, Hegel says, what reason opposes is rather "the absolute fixity which the intellect [*der Verstand*] gives to the dichotomy" of its determinations (Diff 91). Understanding, then, is the realm of absolutely fixed differences and oppositions, while reason is the realm of the unity of differences and oppositions.

An important point must be made about Hegel's view of the understanding [*Verstand*]. He calls the analytic method of the understanding the "dismembering" and "disintegration" of the thing (SL §38 *Zusatz*). But it is essential not to misunderstand his point here. Specifically, it is essential not to understand him as arguing that the method of analysis is either useless or fallacious. For he says that "we cannot do without this division [i.e., analysis] if it be our intention to comprehend. Mind itself . . . inherently divides" (SL §38 *Zusatz*). Hegel's point is that this is not enough: "the error lies in forgetting that this is only one half of the process [of comprehending things], and that the main point is the *reunion* of what has been parted. . . . Analysis establishes the differences in things, and this is very important, . . . but [if we stop here], the consequence [is that] the living thing is killed: life can exist only in the . . . concrete [unity of the thing]" (SL §38 *Zusatz*).

70. The arbitrariness of this cancellation is an *epistemological* arbitrariness: the cancellation is not based on any knowledge of the truth of one or the other alternatives. There may, of course, be other criteria for deciding, most importantly ethical criteria, and in this sense choice would not be arbitrary. This is in fact what the sceptic does – he acts *as if* he were free – and this is also what Kant counsels. But since neither Kant nor the sceptic claims that we can *know* that we are free – in fact, they claim just the opposite, that we never can know this – the decision to act "as if" we were free is *epistemologically* arbitrary. Hegel cannot accept this.

71. Negative freedom (*bloß negatives Freiheit*) is "the concentration of the I into itself . . . [in a life] for which all bonds become broken, . . . where every positive [significance of the world] is annihilated, . . . [and where] freedom is infinite negativity, . . . the nothingness of all that is objective" (ARP 100/SW

10:87). Hegel is actually discussing irony in this passage from his *Philosophy of Art*, but as Kierkegaard points out in his *Concept of Irony*, Hegel's definition of irony as "infinite absolute negativity" (see ARP 102/SW 10:89) rightly – in Kierkegaard's view – considers irony as intrinsically nihilistic.

Hegel views negative freedom to be self-defeating, involving a deep "discontent" and "yearning" for value, which, however, in being "unable to abandon its isolation and withdrawal into itself," is left with only the possibility of purely negative, destructive action (ARP 100/SW 10:87). Hegel sees such a negative freedom as characteristic of the French Revolution, which he viewed as unwittingly making freedom synonymous with the "terror of destruction" (PhS 355–63).

72. Plato, *Sophist* 259c–e.

73. This of course effects a twist on Kant's famous claim that reason (as opposed to the understanding) is "burdened by questions which, as prescribed by the very nature of reason itself, it is not able to ignore, but which, as transcending all its powers, it is also not able to answer" (CPR, Avii).

74. For further discussion of the relation between *Verstand* and *Vernunft* in Hegel's thought, see Clark, pp. 37f; Harris, *An Interpretation*, pp. 37ff (Chapter 4); Smith, pp. 444–47; and Taylor, *Hegel*, pp. 48, 86, 116.

75. Kant, CPR, A407.

Chapter Five

1. As Karl Barth puts it, "*was dieses [Hegelian] System macht, . . . ist nicht Anderes als der in der Fülle der Geschichte durchgehend wahrgenommene Rhythmus des Lebens selber*" (Barth, p. 357).

2. This phrase occurs in the context of Hegel's argument that philosophy must be a "self-shaping" of reason into a systematic totality, so that there is no externally limiting ground of reason. Hegel contrasts his own method where "reason constructs itself" to the methods of Kant and Fichte, both of which he believes to involve "dogmatic" elements (Diff 114–116).

3. Cf. PhS 64: "Consciousness is always . . . learning from experience . . . but equally it is always forgetting [what it has learned] and starting . . . all over again."

4. Descartes, *Discourse*, pp. 69, 71, 75, 85.

5. Taylor, *Hegel*, p. 231.

6. *Letters*, No. 357 [1819], p. 478.

7. Kant, *Metaphysical Elements of Justice*, trans. John Ladd (Indianapolis and New York, 1965), Akad, 206f.

8. I discuss Hegel's notion of the unity of philosophy in more detail in section 3 below (see p. 103).

9. See also PhS 31f: "Science dare only organize itself by the life of the *Begriff* [i.e., thought] itself. . . . [Rather than the] external attachment of schema [to thought], science is the self-moving soul . . . [or] immanent . . . unfolding . . . [of the] content" of thought.

10. Hegel is not making the absurd claim that we do not think axiomatically or inductively – or for that matter, according to any other method of demonstrative reasoning. These methods are also intrinsic to thought – they are ways of thinking – but their status is considered by Hegel to be different from the method he is proposing. The difference is this: while we may think axiomatically, or alternatively inductively, etc., when we apply ourselves to particular sorts of questions or problems, these methods of thought are specific to these particular sorts of questions. The dialectical and teleological method that Hegel advocates, on the other hand, is claimed to be a universal and necessary feature of our thought: thought is intrinsically and inescapably dialectical and teleological.

The claim is not that when we do mathematics we think dialectically, or that when we make an experiment in chemistry we think teleologically, but that from a broader perspective, the perspective which regards the whole process of the development of thought (both the thought of an individual and of human culture in general), thought necessarily has a dialectical and teleological character. There is, in addition, a second-level employment of this method, in which the philosopher describes and interprets the patterns of thought, or the course of history, or the structure of reality. This second-level employment of the dialectical or speculative method is, of course, not by any means a necessary way of going about the business of philosophy. While Hegel sees hints of it in many previous philosophers, he regards himself as the first to concisely and consistently employ it. Its advantage – providing, of course, that Hegel is right about the nature and structure of thought – is that, in mirroring the necessary structure of the dynamics of thought, it allows for the true achievement of Aristotle's desideratum of "thought thinking thought."

11. Heidegger, *Nietzsche*, vol. 1 (*The Will to Power as Art*), trans. D. F. Krell (New York, 1979), p. 59.

12. Wittgenstein, section 129.

13. Wittgenstein, section 133.

14. Barth, pp. 358f (emphasis added).

15. Kant, CPR, B102ff.

16. Wittgenstein, section 132.

17. Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, 1017^a23–28.

18. Cf. LL 53, where Hegel speaks of "the dead bones of logic" which need to be "quickenened by spirit, and so become possessed of a substantial, significant content."

See also *Letters*, No. 122 [1808, to Niethammer], p. 175: "Nobody knows anymore what to do with this old logic. One drags it around like some old heirloom only because a substitute, the need of which is generally felt, is not yet available."

For other discussions of Hegel's critique of formal logic, see Lauer, *A Reading*, pp. 142-44 (Lauer is discussing the section of the *Phenomenology* on "Observation . . . Logical and Psychological Laws"); Flay, p. 125; E. Harris, *An Interpretation*, pp. 7, 208f, 240; and Mure, pp. 16ff, 159-61, 207, 301.

19. Barth, pp. 351f.

Aristotle, in the opening passage of his *De Interpretatione*, makes a point which is very similar to one made by Hegel in his argument that linguistic analysis has an ontological significance. Aristotle writes that "spoken words are the symbols of mental experience and written words are the symbols of spoken words. . . . [Further], the mental experiences which these [words] symbolize are the same for all, as also are those things of which our experiences are the images" (16^a3-8, emphasis added). Leaving aside the question of the univocality of mental experiences, the point that I wish to call attention to is the idea that words are symbols of mental experiences and that mental experiences are "images" of events in the world (a point Aristotle makes clear in his *De Anima*). Towards the beginning of the Preface to the second edition of his "larger" *Logic* Hegel makes a similar point.

The forms of thought are, in the first instance, displayed and stored in human language. Nowadays we cannot be too often reminded that it is thinking which distinguishes man from beasts. *Into all that becomes something inward for men, an image or conception as such*, into all that he makes his own, *language has penetrated*, and everything that he has transformed into language and expresses in it contains a category [of thought] — . . . so much is logic his natural element, indeed his own peculiar nature. If nature as such, as the physical world, is contrasted with the spiritual sphere, then logic must certainly be said to be the supernatural element which permeates every relationship of man to nature, his sensation, intuition, desire, need, instinct, and simply by so doing transforms it into something human, . . . into ideas and purposes (LL 31f, emphasis added).

This passage expresses Hegel's conviction that *language is thought's permeation of the world, of reality*. I believe that this is Aristotle's point as well. But at any rate Hegel's interpretation of the significance of linguistic analysis should leave us in no doubt as to his assignment of a crucially metaphysical role to language. Language is the mediation of thought and being, of consciousness and object, of mind and world, and logic is the making explicit of the structure of this mediation.

20. Carnap, "The Old and the New Logic," trans. Isaac Levi, in A. J. Ayer, *Positivism*, p. 143.

21. See, e.g., Carnap, "Elimination," in Ayer, *Positivism*, pp. 78f.

22. Carnap, "Elimination," in Ayer, *Positivism*, p. 76.

23. In fact, many contemporary empiricists themselves came to realize this – some 130 or 140 years after Hegel had written these words. Attempts to formulate criteria of empirical testability (in terms of verifiability, falsifiability, operationism, etc.) have been persuasively undermined. (See Carl Hempel, "The Empiricist Criterion of Meaning," in Ayer, *Positivism*, pp. 111–18, and "Empiricist Criteria of Cognitive Significance: Problems and Changes," in his *Aspects of Scientific Explanation and other Essays* [London and New York, 1965], pp. 102–13; see also Carnap, "Testability and Meaning," *Philosophy of Science* 3 [1936]: 419–71, and 4 [1937]: 1–40.)

This has led to an acceptance by many of the critical importance of acknowledging "theoretical entities" to determine cognitive meaning. (See Hempel, "The Theoretician's Dilemma," in *Aspects*, pp. 177–79, 184; also Alonzo Church, "The Need for Abstract Entities in Semantic Analysis," *Daedalus* 80 [1951], reprinted in *Contemporary Philosophical Logic*, Irving Copi and James Gould, eds. [New York, 1978], pp. 166–76; and W. P. Alston, "Ontological Commitments," *Philosophical Studies* 9 [1958]: 8–17.)

Indeed, the movement has been made away from "basic," "observation sentences" to theories as a whole, along with their "interpretive framework," as the locus of meaning. (See W. V. O. Quine, *Word and Object* [New York, 1960], p. 4; Carnap, *Meaning and Necessity: A Study in Semantics and Modal Logic* [Chicago, 1964], pp. 206–7, 221; and Friedrich Waismann, "Verifiability," in Antony Flew, ed., *Logic and Language* [Oxford, 1955], pp. 117ff.)

24. As Hegel puts it, "it is evident [this argument goes] that the greatest minds have erred, because they have been contradicted by others. . . . When it is admitted that philosophy ought to be a real science, and one philosophy must certainly be the true, the question arises as to which philosophy it is, and how it can be known. Each one asserts its genuineness . . ." (HPh 1:16).

25. Barth, p. 363 (emphasis added).

26. Thus Kant writes in his *Critique of Judgement*: "Now where we consider a material whole and regard it as in point of form a product resulting from the parts and their powers and capacities of self-integration . . . what we represent to ourselves in this way is a mechanical generation of the whole. But from this view of the generation of a whole we can elicit no conception of a whole as end – a whole whose intrinsic possibility emphatically presupposes the idea of a whole as that upon which the very nature and action of the parts depend. . . . At the same time this is the conclusion that we should in fact have to draw were we entitled to look on material beings as things in themselves" (CJ 408).

And cf. CJ 421f: "The mechanism of nature is not sufficient to enable us to conceive the possibility of an organized being, but . . . in its root origin it [i.e., mechanism] must be subordinated to a cause acting by design. . . . [Still], this is something which our reason does not comprehend. . . . [And yet], for all that, this principle [of teleology] remains in full and undiminished force, . . . [for] we cannot avoid . . . adopting the teleological principle of the production of organized beings."

27. Tom Rockmore has written two very informative articles on the role of circularity in Hegel's philosophy. He details how circularity is an important aspect of Hegel's conception of the *Begriff*, of history, and of philosophy in general, and compares it with the role of circularity in the philosophies of Aristotle and Fichte. Rockmore, "Epistemological Circularity" (see Chapter Two, p. 170, n. 60 above); Rockmore, "Epistemology in Fichte and Hegel: A Confrontation," in *Erneuerung der Transzendental Philosophie im Anschluß an Kant und Fichte*, hrsg. von Klaus Hammacher und Albert Mues, (Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt, 1979).

28. The concepts of thought are "circles" because all thought is teleological for Hegel, so that the initial expression and significance of a concept, while immediate and one-sided, contains the germ of the completed concept as its *telos*. The development of the germ to fruition is the activity of making the concept manifest and actual. With the completion of this development, the concept illuminates for the first time the full significance of its origin, and in this sense circles back to its beginning (which is now seen from a different, enriched perspective).

29. See Findlay, *Hegel*, pp. 23, 58–60, 81; and Rockmore, "Epistemological Circularity," pp. 235, 238.

30. Hegel shares Hume's discontent with the Cartesian axiomatic method – although he does not mention Hume's criticisms – on the grounds that it leaves no legitimate way for demonstration to develop. As Hume puts it, "[even] if there were [a primitive axiom such as Descartes proposes to have arrived at through his method of doubt], [we] could [not] advance a step beyond it but by the use of those very faculties of which we are supposed to be already diffident" (*Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, Section 12, Part 1, in Burt, ed., *English Philosophers*, p. 679).

31. Hegel writes in his "shorter" *Logic*: "only out of . . . error does the truth arise; . . . error, . . . when superseded, is still a necessary dynamic element of truth: for truth can only be where it makes itself its own result" (SL §274 *Zusatz*). The false is but the one-sided, or the incomplete, for Hegel, so that there is no absolute falsehood (except about contingent matters of fact). Further, error is the precondition for truth, for truth does not just pop into existence *ex nihilo*, but is the result of reason struggling with its errors: to comprehend a truth requires us to comprehend its genesis, and this directly refers us to falsity and error.

Thus Hegel's notion of error is very different from Descartes's view that "it is in the misuse of the free will that . . . the characteristic nature of error is met with" (*Mediations*, in *The Rationalists*, p. 150; and v. *Principles of Philosophy*, in *Descartes Selections*, ed. Ralph M. Eaton [New York, 1955], #XXXI). Since Hegel views error as the incomplete, it is not simply a disparity *within consciousness* between understanding and will, but a "disparity" *within things* as well – a disparity, or incongruence, between potentiality and actuality, immediacy and developed *telos*.

32. Descartes, *Discourse*, pp. 41, 44.

33. Descartes, *Discourse*, p. 59.

34. Sextus Empiricus, *Outlines of Pyrrhonism*, Bk. 1, Chap. 3, Section 7; cited by Hegel in his HPH 2:339.

35. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* 1095^b1–3; *Physics* 184^a17.

36. Aristotle, *Parts of Animals* 646^a25.

37. Aristotle, v. *Nicomachean Ethics* 1095³30–^b7; *Posterior Analytics* Book 1, Chapter 13.

As Findlay remarks, "those who expect all thought-advance to be that of the deduction of conclusions from firmly established premises are quite incapable of dialectical thinking: in dialectic it is the insufficiency of the premises that leads to the more sufficient conclusion" (in his forward to the "shorter" *Logic*, p. xiii).

38. Cf. LL 71: "the *advance* [of science] is a *retreat* into the ground, to what is primary and true. . . . This *last* [stage or result], the ground, is thus also that from which the *first* proceeds, that which at first appeared as an immediacy [i.e., an axiom, an undemonstrated primitive term or proposition]."

39. *Meno* 81d.

40. *Meno* 84a. For comparisons and contrasts between Hegel and Plato on recollection, see Jean-Louis Viellard Baron, "Hegel, philosophie de la réminiscence," *International Studies in Philosophy* 8 (1976): 147, 150–52 (Baron finds Plato's recollection to be "mythological" and "psychological" in contrast to Hegel's concept); Crites, *In the Twilight*, pp. 78–82 (Crites is relying on Kierkegaard's critique of both Platonic and Hegelian recollection, a matter I will take up in Chapter Seven, pp. 143–44); Flay, p. 239 (Flay distinguishes between the different senses in which what is recollected is "already there" for Plato and Hegel).

41. In a recently discovered fragment from Hegel's Jena years ("Über Mythologie, Volksgeist und Kunst"), Hegel refers to "Mnemosyne, or the absolute Muse." Verene cites the whole passage (pp. 36f).

42. T. S. Eliot, *Little Gidding* (London, 1943), verse V, lines 243–52.

43. Baron, pp. 151, 152.

Chapter Six

1. This view of history as a progressive path of spirit from an original "enshrouded consciousness" to a position of self-knowledge is another way of seeing Hegel's interpretation of the Fall of man. As we saw in Chapter Three, our "original innocence" is in fact a state of ignorance which can be overcome only through the "curse" by which we must work to transform our ignorance into knowledge.

2. Crites, "For the Best Account," p. 145. Shlomo Avineri asks the same question in his "Consciousness and History: *List der Vernunft* in Hegel and Marx," in Warren E. Steinkraus, ed., *New Studies in Hegel's Philosophy* (New York, 1971), pp. 108f, 115ff: Given the fact that "Hegel sees his own contemporary age as the apex of historical development, . . . what are the prospects of further historical change? . . . what about the future?" I will return to discuss both Crites' and Avineri's interpretations of Hegel's eschatology in Chapter Seven.

3. Lauer, *A Reading*, p. 5.

4. See Fichte, *Wissenschaftslehre*, pp. 115, 117, 217, 269f, for support that this is indeed his position.

Hegel directs this criticism most usually and persistently against Fichte, but it is meant to cover the whole course of German idealism up to his own philosophy. Hegel characterizes the German *Aufklärung* in general as tending to "transport the infinite into abstraction or incomprehensibility": the absolute, whether it is considered as God or as reason in its transcendent capacity, is considered as a "Beyond outside of consciousness" (HPh 3:407).

Hence against Kant, who views the ideas of reason as theoretical illusions, Hegel makes the same charge as against Fichte, that knowledge remains a "never ending progress" (v. HPh 3:461, 481, 491f, 494, 498, 501; Diff 81, 132-34; F&K 168, 170, 172). Hegel repeats this charge against Jacobi (HPh 3:419f), who parallels Kant in saying that "reason, when it begets objects, begets phantoms of the brain" (*Briefe über die Lehre des Spinoza*, cited in Hegel's HPh 3:419). Schelling also comes in for criticism on this score, since, even though in Hegel's early years he regarded Schelling's notion of an "absolute indifference point" to be the genuine achievement of Absolute Knowledge, in his later years Hegel looked more critically at Schelling's idealist system. Insofar as Schelling is committed to the view that, as he says, "the struggle [of ego with its object] cannot be reconciled by [any] one act [of consciousness], but only by an *infinite succession* of acts," so that "the ego . . . [is] an infinite becoming" (*System des transcendentalen Idealismus*, cited in Hegel's HPh 3:522f) – then Schelling is open to exactly the same criticism as Kant, Jacobi and Fichte.

5. Lukács, p. 547.

6. Crites, "For the Best Account," p. 146.

7. Indeed, there was a literary form which was in use among both the Jews and Christians during the period from 200 B.C. to A.D. 100 which was called "apocalyptic" (from the Greek "to reveal"). Hence, much of the New Testament is apocalyptic in style. In the Old Testament, the Book of Daniel (ca. 167-186 B.C.) is the only fully fledged apocalyptic text, but there are many examples of prophetic eschatology as well (e.g., Amos, Hosea, Isaiah, Micah, Ezekiel, Zephaniah, Jeremiah, Haggai, and Zechariah). See *The Dartmouth Bible*, ed. R. B. Chamberlin and H. Feldman (Boston, 1961), p. 1170; and *Interpreters Dictionary of the Bible*, ed. George Arthur Buttrick et al. (Nashville, 1962), vol. 1, p. 157, and vol. 4, p. 58.

8. Cf. Isaiah 65:17-25:

17. "For behold [the prophet hears the Lord say], I create new heavens and a new earth, and the former things shall not be remembered or come into mind.

18. But be glad and rejoice for ever in that which I create; for behold, I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy.

19. I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and be glad in my people; no more shall be heard in it the sound of weeping and the cry of distress."

9. Cf. Isaiah 65:17.

10. Cf. Rev. 22:5: And night shall be no more; they need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they shall reign for ever and ever.

11. This is not least because, as G. F. Moore says in his *History of Religions* (New York, 1913), "a comparison of Paul with John, and of both with the deposit of primitive Palestinian tradition in the older Gospels and the first chapters of the Acts, . . . [and with] the other writings ultimately included in the New Testament, . . . shows what widely diverse conceptions [of salvation and redemption] existed side by side in the last quarter of the first century" (vol. 2, p. 144).

A major point of diversity, for example, is that the Book of Revelation is unique (in the Bible, if not in Jewish apocrypha) in its prophecy of the Millennium – the thousand-year preliminary or interim rule of Christ on earth before the final victory over Satan and the "second coming" which will bring final judgment and redemption. The other biblical prophecies suggest that Christ's return will bring final deliverance (i.e., they do not speak of two returns).

Interpretations of the Book of Revelation itself differ widely, due in part to the attempt to read its quite materialistic imagery, which was "appropriated entire from Jewish sources with only a superficial adaptation to Christian use," according to Moore (*History*, vol. 2, p. 145), in a figurative and more strictly Christian way; and in part to the attempt to generalize from the specific historical context of the Roman persecution. The pre- and post-Millennialists,

for example, differ in their interpretations both of the thousand-year messianic reign – the so-called first resurrection – as well as the significance of the “second” or “last resurrection,” the final judgment and the “making anew” of the world.

12. See *Interpreters Dictionary*, vol. 2, pp. 138, 610, and vol. 4, pp. 61, 69. This orthodox interpretation is not by any means universal, however. Theologians like Walter Rauschenbusch, with his “Social Gospel,” and Adolf von Harnack, Horace Bushnell, and Harry Emerson Fosdick, believe that the redemption is to be continuous with human history, and hence a social and historical overcoming of tribulation. In this, they share Hegel’s nonorthodoxy exactly. Rauschenbusch, for example, writes that the Kingdom of God (the New Jerusalem) is nothing but “humanity organized according to the will of God,” “a growing perfection in the collective life of humanity” (cited by Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., “Reinhold Niebuhr’s Role in American Political Thought and Life,” in Robert W. Bretall and Charles W. Kegley, ed., *Reinhold Niebuhr* [New York, 1961], p. 128).

13. Niebuhr, *The Nature and Destiny of Man: A Christian Interpretation* (New York, 1941, 1943), vol. 2, pp. 288, 290 (and Chapter X, *passim*).

14. Niebuhr, *Faith and History: A Comparison of Christian and Modern Views of History* (New York, 1949), p. 235 and *passim*.

15. Niebuhr, *Nature and Destiny*, vol. 2, pp. 287, 289.

16. Löwith, “History and Christianity,” in Bretall and Kegley, ed., *Reinhold Niebuhr*, p. 283 (emphasis added).

17. This is a departure from orthodoxy because of its interpretation of the references in Scripture to the “knowledge of God” in a sense which makes this knowledge the same as any other theoretical knowledge. The *Interpreters Dictionary of the Bible* makes two appropriate points: (1) While it is true that in both the Old and New Testaments man is exhorted “to know God,” this knowledge is “practically synonymous” with *belief*, or the exhortation to have *faith* in God (vol. 3, pp. 43, 44). [Interestingly, Hegel also speaks of the ultimate synonymy of knowledge and faith (e.g., HPh 1:63; 3:491f; Diff 100; F&K 142; SL §1). But for Hegel, faith conflates into knowledge, while in Scripture knowledge (of God) conflates into faith.] (2) While Scripture portrays “a God who wants to be known,” this knowledge depends on God’s self-disclosure in such a way that it is not so much a question of human *discovery* as it is a matter of *God’s gift*, in which man is receptive and humble (vol. 3, p. 44; vol. 4, pp. 54, 55). For “the sublimity of the redemptive work of God transcends the natural limits of the human mind,” so that God always “remains hidden and unsearchable” (vol. 3, p. 44).

18. Kierkegaard, *Postscript*, p. 194.

19. Kierkegaard, *Postscript*, v. pp. 28–31, 189, 193f, 201f, 208f, 540.

20. Kierkegaard, *Postscript*, p. 219. Kierkegaard explicitly rejects what he calls the "Socratic view," that an individual's "self-knowledge is a knowledge of God." This makes "the entire world centered in the individual," decentering God (*Philosophical Fragments*, trans. David Swenson, revised by Howard V. Hong [Princeton, 1974], p. 14). For Hegel, on the other hand, human and divine nature ultimately coincide, due to the rational essence of each.

21. Niebuhr, *Nature and Destiny*, vol. 1, p. 289.

22. Kroner, in his Introduction to *Early Theological Writings*, p. 54.

23. Barth, pp. 366, 376, 377.

24. See esp. PhS 126–38, 453–60, 476.

For discussions of the unhappy consciousness, see Hyppolite, *Genèse*, pp. 184–208 (Hyppolite sees the unhappy consciousness as "*le thème fondamental de la Phénoménologie*" [p. 208]; so too does Jean Wahl, *Le malheur de la conscience dans la philosophie de Hegel* [Paris, 1951]); Christensen, "Hegel's Phenomenological Analysis" (comparison with Freud); Flay, pp. 101–11; Murray Greene, "Hegel's 'Unhappy Consciousness' and Nietzsche's 'Slave Morality,'" in Christensen, *Hegel and the Philosophy of Religion*; Solomon, *In the Spirit*, pp. 465–70; and Taylor, *Hegel*, pp. 57–59, 159–61, 206–8.

25. Christ oscillates throughout the Gospels between saying that the Kingdom of God is approaching and that it has already arrived with his ministry. See *Interpreters Dictionary*, vol. 2, pp. 136f for references.

26. PhS 111f. The context is the discussion of the Master-Slave dialectic.

27. Châtelet, *Hegel* (Paris, 1968), p. 161.

28. Löwith, *From Hegel to Nietzsche: The Revolution in Nineteenth-Century Thought*, trans. David E. Green (Garden City, New York, 1967), pp. 39, 37f.

29. Löwith, *Hegel to Nietzsche*, p. 39.

30. Löwith, *Hegel to Nietzsche*, p. 39.

31. This "highest form" of Christianity is the form in which it has been interpreted philosophically (see PhS 463, 479). This has sometimes been read as meaning that for Hegel philosophy is to displace religion, in the sense of achieving a higher truth. But this is incorrect. Hegel makes it clear over and over again that "faith and [philosophic] thought are both of them knowledge," that they "are thus one" (HPh 3:420; v. 419), and that they both have the same object, truth (SL §2 *Anmerkung*; HPH 1:63). Philosophy and religion have the same content (v. PhM §573 *Anmerkung*) (although they have different forms, religion being "representational" – i.e., symbolic – and philosophy being "conceptual" [v. HPH 1:76; PhS 412, 463, 466–67, 476–79]), and hence philosophy is in no way antithetical to religion, nor, consequently, a going beyond its truth. In fact, Hegel asserts that "philosophy in its development [is] the revela-

tion of God" (HPh 3:547). See also *Letters*, No. 466a [1824, to Benedikt von Baader], p. 572, where Hegel explicitly takes issue with the interpretation that religion is surpassed by philosophy in his system: "[there is] not merely a community but indeed an identity of truth content in the two cases [religion and philosophy]."

32. Löwith, *Hegel to Nietzsche*, pp. 38, 39.

33. Important discussions of Hegel's controversial concept of the annulment of time may be found in Hedwig, pp. 143, 149f; Labarrière, "La sursomption du temps," pp. 93-97; Marcuse, *Hegel's Ontology*, pp. 315-16; Miller, pp. 206-9; Verene, pp. 108, 112; and Westphal, *History and Truth*, pp. 219-21.

34. The "*Begriff* that is there" expresses the ideal of Hegel's grand synthesis, the unity of thought and being, of *Begriff* and *Da-sein*.

Kojève has an important discussion of this idea, that time is the existential shape of the *Begriff* (Kojève, pp. 101ff). His analysis is so important because it argues very strongly that this notion of time precludes a consistent assertion of the end of history. But Kojève does not cite the whole passage – he does not note that Hegel goes on to characterize the existential-temporal shape of the *Begriff* as *incomplete*. (See our immediately following discussion.)

35. Lukács, p. 546.

36. Jähnig, p. 69.

37. As Viellard Baron writes, *Erinnerung* is "*la remémoration et l'intériorité . . . de l'essence qui était jusque-là immédiate*" – a bringing into conceptual thought of the immediate external existence, now conceived in its eternal significance, its essence (p. 148).

38. The transcendent aspect of truth corresponds to the Hegelian notion of *eternity* as "neither before nor after time" but "absolutely present" (PhN §247 *Zusatz*; cf. HPh 1:287; 2:84f; PhH 79): "Eternity will not come to be, nor was it, but it is" (PhN §258 *Zusatz*). This is a very Platonic conception, insofar as it seeks to distinguish between a "phenomenal side" of spirit in which "the universal . . . enters into the time-process," and an eternal side, in which "the idea, spirit, transcends time; . . . it is eternal . . . because it does not lose itself [in time]" (PhN §258 *Zusatz*; and cf. Plato, *Timaeus*, 37^d-39^e).

39. Marx, *Manuscripts*, pp. 345, 348.

40. Both Merold Westphal (*History and Truth*, p. 221) and George Armstrong Kelley (p. 227) make the interesting point that Hegel's "history" is analogous to what "pre-history" was for Marx. Westphal writes: "In both cases the distinction is between an epoch of human history in which man's existence falls fundamentally short of its ideal and an epoch in which that ideal is concretely realized. At the point of transition Marx says history begins, while Hegel says it ends. Since this difference is purely semantic, it is . . .

ironical that Marx should have directed one of his sharpest attacks on Hegel against just this [theory]."

41. Châtelet, p. 161.

42. As Hegel writes in his *Encyclopædia*, the becoming of spirit is not mere "empty repetition, . . . a monotonous cycle [i.e., without evolution]," but "in itself, or in its very principle, [the becoming of spirit] . . . contains a progress" (PhM §399).

43. This criticism is at the center of Kierkegaard's objections to the Hegelian system. Kierkegaard, with tongue in cheek, titled his major philosophic text the *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, precisely so as to call attention to what he viewed as the absurdity of a system which is never complete. In one unforgettable passage, Kierkegaard writes:

I shall be as willing as the next man to fall down in worship before the System, if only I can manage to set eyes on it. Hitherto I have had no success; and though I have young legs, I am almost weary from running back and forth between Herod and Pilate. Once or twice I have been on the verge of bending the knee. But at the last moment, when I already had my handkerchief spread on the ground, to avoid soiling my trousers, and I made a trusting appeal to one of the initiated who stood by: "Tell me now sincerely, is it entirely finished; for if so I will kneel down before it, even at the risk of ruining a pair of trousers (for on account of the heavy traffic to and fro, the road has become quite muddy)," – I always received the same answer: "No, it is not yet quite finished." And so there was another postponement – of the System, and of my homage. . . . For here we have it: a fragment of a system is nonsense (*Postscript*, pp. 97f).

Chapter Seven

1. Tom Rockmore points this out in his article, "Hegel on Epistemological Circularity and Certainty" (pp. 235f): "In many passages, . . . Hegel seems to put forward . . . an unequivocal claim to fulfill the philosophic quest for irrelative knowledge. . . . But in other passages, Hegel apparently defends a significantly weaker view. . . . There is hence a clear tension in the speculative system between an absolute, irrelative view of knowledge as it has long been the goal of the philosophic quest for certainty, and a weaker, less traditional view of knowledge as relative."

2. I should mention that I have omitted any discussion of an analogous eschatological issue in Hegel's philosophy, the famous claim in his *Aesthetics* that *art is dead*. Hegel argues that "the peculiar mode to which artistic production and works of art belong no longer satisfies our supreme need," so that "art is, . . . on the side of its highest destiny, a thing of the past" (ARP 32, 34). Just

as with the two possible interpretations of Hegel's talk of the completion of history, we may view his talk of the death of art in two incompatible ways: either we have reached an absolute, final stage of cultural development (in the poetry of Romanticism, which Hegel regards as the highest achievement of art), or, on the contrary, while art may have reached its "highest destiny" for the present, there remain future cycles of evolution of culture, and with them, future possibilities for the evolution of art. By this second interpretation, when Hegel speaks of art "no longer satisfying our supreme need," we would understand this as referring to the need of his own epoch. The death-throes of art would be like the perpetually recurring death-throes of all spirit, where from the ashes there springs forth new life.

Nearly all the commentators on Hegel's aesthetics read his eschatological language in an absolutist way, as announcing the final death of art. And it may be that this reading most clearly captures Hegel's intentions. I only wish to suggest the possibility of an alternative reading, one which would be consistent with my proposal for an epochal interpretation of his larger eschatological theory, an interpretation which seeks to set aside his tendency to valorize the ultimacy of his own age at the expense of his radical metaphysics of becoming.

For discussions of this issue, see Curtis L. Carter, "Re-examination of 'Death of Art' Interpretation of Hegel's Aesthetics," in Warren E. Steinkraus and K. L. Schmitz, eds., *Art and Logic in Hegel's Philosophy* (Atlantic Highlands, 1980), pp. 91-102; James Crooks, "Irony as a Post-Romantic Possibility For Art: Kierkegaard's Reply to Hegel," *Eidos* 3 (1984): 118-134; William Desmond, *Art and the Absolute: A Study of Hegel's Aesthetics* (Albany, 1986); William Desmond, "Art, Philosophy and Concreteness in Hegel," *Owl of Minerva* 16 (1985): 131-46; William Desmond, "Hegel, Art, and History, Curtis Carter (commentator)," in Robert Perkins, ed., *History and System* (Albany, 1984), pp. 173-94; Henry S. Harris, "The Resurrection of Art," *Owl of Minerva* 16 (1984): 5-20; G. Oliver, "Contemporary Art and Hegel's Thesis of the Death of Art," *South African Journal of Philosophy* 2 (1983): 1-7; Liberato Santoro, "Hegel's Aesthetics and 'The End of Art,'" *Philosophical Studies* 30 (1984): 62-72; Richard Taft, "Art and Philosophy in the Early Development of Hegel's System," *Owl of Minerva* 18 (1987): 145-62.

3. Kojève, p. 148.

4. Although the recollective aspect of Absolute Knowledge is alluded to in Hegel's saying that science is the knowledge of the "unity in opposition" of spirit "in its whole development," and that the work of the history of philosophy is to depict and represent the strife of spirit in "the whole history of the world."

5. For other discussions of this Calvary/Golgotha passage, see Baron, pp. 157-59; Crites, "The Golgotha of Absolute Spirit," in Merold Westphal, ed., *Method and Speculation*; Crites, *In the Twilight*, p. 101; Labarrière, pp. 97-98; and Verene, p. 112.

6. Stephen Crites also uses the image of the *via dolorosa* ("Golgotha," p. 47), and Viellard Baron uses the image of the stations of the cross (Baron, p. 159).

7. Crites, "Golgotha," p. 55.

8. Crites, *In the Twilight*, pp. 101, 104.

9. Fichte's *Sonnenklarer Bericht*, or *Report, Clear as the Sun, for the General Public on the Real Essence of the Latest Philosophy: An Attempt to Compel the Reader to Understand*, was published in 1801. This was four years after he had added a Preface to the *Wissenschaftslehre*, in which he berated those of his readers who "see nothing but letters on the page," even though he has made every "endeavor to achieve the utmost clarity" in his writing (*Wissenschaftslehre*, pp. 420, 422).

10. This reading of Hegel's eschatological conception of the "new world" is supported by a passage we have not yet cited from the "Final Result" section of the *History of Philosophy*. In this passage Hegel again refers to the "sinking-inward" of spirit in knowledge, and says that "the deeper, however, the spirit goes within itself, the more vehement is the opposition [between thought and reality], the more abundant is the wealth without; the depth is to be measured by the greatness of the craving with which spirit seeks to find itself in what lies outside of itself" (HPh 3:545f). This seems to undermine the interpretation that the sinking-inward of knowledge in its recollective comprehension of the history of spirit is a final end. Rather, it points back outwards, to the world; a recollective resolution of the past has within it an impulse, or "craving," towards the future.

See also PhS 490 (shortly before the "new world" passage): "Spirit, however, has shown itself to us to be neither merely the withdrawal of self-consciousness into its pure inwardness, not the mere submergence of self-consciousness into substance. . . ." This periodic sinking-inward leads always to a future externalization and "going out" of itself (*sich ausgehen*) into the world.

11. See p. 203, n. 43 above.

12. Kierkegaard, *The Concept of Dread*, trans. Walter Lowrie (Princeton, 1973), pp. 80-81. See also *Postscript*, pp. 194, 505-8.

13. Crites, *In the Twilight*, p. 79.

14. Kierkegaard, *Repetition: An Essay in Experimental Psychology*, trans. Walter Lowrie (Princeton, 1946), p. 149.

15. Kojève, p. 168.

16. Engels, *Ludwig Feuerbach*, p. 13.

Ironically, Marx and Engels become hoisted by their own petard in just the way they accuse Hegel of doing. Hegel's fault, they say, is that he con-

tradicts his own dialectic by seeking to overcome it in a final resolution of history: "The Hegelian method, for the sake of the system had to become untrue to itself" (Engels, *Ludwig Feuerbach*, p. 27f). But there is this tension in their own writings as well. They consciously take over Hegel's dialectic (although stripped of its "false metaphysics"): "Hegel was not simply put aside. On the contrary, we started out from his revolutionary side, . . . from the dialectical method" (*Ludwig Feuerbach*, p. 27f). The dialectic is the impelling force of history, the tension of contradiction present in the world, the resolution of contradiction, and the rising of new oppositions. But Marx and Engels propose a *final resolution* of the dialectic – an ultimate overcoming of the perpetual course of conflict in the world. They speak of the "complete restoration of man to himself" (Marx, *Manuscripts*, p. 348), and the "perfected unity in essence of man with nature" (*Manuscripts*, p. 349), which comes with "true communism" – the "true resolution" and "solution to the riddle of history" (*Manuscripts*, p. 348; and cf. Marx, *Critique of the Gotha Program*, ed. C. P. Dutt [New York, 1938], p. 16). The dialectic is thus finally *aufgehoben* with the overcoming of alienation and the contradiction between forces of labor and production, and to this extent Marx and Engels are subject to the very criticism they lodge against Hegel, that his vision of resolution conflicts with his doctrine of the dialectic.

17. Hyppolite, "Le 'scientifique' et l'idéologique' dans une perspective marxiste" (1971), cited and translated by J. Heckman in the Introduction to Hyppolite's *Genesis and Structure*, p. xxxviii.

18. Hyppolite, *Genèse et Structure*, p. 557.

19. Eric Voegelin, "On Hegel – A Study in Sorcery," *Studium Generale* 24 (1971): 337, 349–50.

20. Jähnig, p. 69.

21. Kojève, p. 191; cf. pp. 32, 35, 95, 97f, 237.

22. Kojève, pp. 158–60 (n. 6).

23. Rosen, *An Introduction*, pp. 16, xix; and v. pp. 9, 15, 45.

24. Rosen, *An Introduction*, p. 279.

25. Châtelet, p. 161.

26. Taylor, *Hegel*, p. 344.

27. Taylor, *Hegel*, p. 349.

28. We have already cited the view of Raya Dunayevskaya to the effect that Hegel "stopped the ceaseless motion of the dialectic just because his pen reached the end of his [book]," and Julia Kristeva's claim that Hegel's "paranoia" led him to a "repressive" closure of history (see Chapter Two, p. 17 above). See also Lukács, p. 546 (Lukács charges that Hegel reduces history to

"a post-festum commentary on the path leading up to . . . its consummation"); Enzo Paci, "*La Phénoménologie et l'histoire dans la pensée de Hegel*," *Praxis* (1971): 93-100 (Paci believes that it is Hegel's "absolutizing" of history "*qui empêche à Hegel d'arriver à la praxis*" [p. 100]); Verene, p. 108 (Verene says that with Absolute Knowledge, spirit "no longer lives from stage to stage but recollects"); and Westphal, *History and Truth*, p. 226 (Westphal speaks of Hegel's "theory of [history's] culmination [as] . . . an unbelievable *Deus ex machina*").

29. Shlomo Avineri, *The Modern State*, p. 237. See also Avineri, "Consciousness and History," p. 117: "There are therefore far more ambiguities in Hegel's views about the future than the traditional view, that sees Hegel as absolutizing his own contemporary world, would have allowed."

30. Richard Kroner, "System und Geschichte bei Hegel," *Logos*, Band XX (1931): 243-58.

31. Kroner, "System und Geschichte," p. 252; and cf. *Von Kant bis Hegel* (Tübingen, 1921), vol. 2, pp. 518ff.

32. See also George Armstrong Kelley, *Hegel's Retreat from Eleusis: Studies in Political Thought* (Princeton, 1978): Kelley insists that "[Hegel] does not foreclose either the temporality of the process nor the empirical addition of significantly new . . . events" (p. 227), yet he does not seem to take seriously the other side of the dilemma; and Ephrem-Dominique Yon, "Esthétique de la contemplation et esthétique de la transgression: à propos de passage de la Religion au Savoir Absolu dans la *Phénoménologie de l'esprit* de Hegel," *Revue philosophique de Louvain* 74 (1976): Yon says that "*certes, le Savoir Absolu est bien l'intégrale Erinnerung de tout ce qui s'est cultivé dans le savoir des hommes, mais il est encore, comme être-là intériorisé, un nouvel être, un nouveau monde et une nouvelle figure de l'esprit*" (p. 554), but again, Yon does not seriously consider the conflict of this epochal view with the absolutist reading.

33. See also Viellard Baron, "Hegel, Philosophie de la Reminiscence?" Baron sees the inner ambiguity in Hegel's position, speaking of "*les deux aspects indissociables, celui de l'existence temporelle, qui est l'histoire, celui de . . . l'intériorisation du souvenir dans le recueillement* [of absolute knowledge]" (pp. 157-58). In keeping with the "hesitant" epochal reading, Baron is not willing to simply negate the absolutist side of this paradox, although he does finally side with the reading which sees recollection as a "new birth" of spirit (p. 156).

34. Since penning these words, I have discovered that this charge is unfair to Marcuse. While I remain convinced that in his *Reason and Revolution* Marcuse opts for the epochal reading without considering the claims of the absolutist interpretation, this is not the case in his much earlier work on *Hegel's Ontology and the Theory of Historicity* [first published 1932], trans. Seyla Benhabib (Cambridge, 1987). In that work, Marcuse explicitly refers to the "unusual double meaning" in Hegel's theory of history, one (the absolutist

that which "lies outside the self's activity" (p. 210) and "of which nothing more can be said, save that it must be utterly opposed to the self" (p. 279).

61. W. G. Sumner, *Folkways* (Boston, 1907). References are to the edited selection of this work in Oliver A. Johnson, ed., *Ethics*, 4th edition (New York, 1978), pp. 397-407.

62. Sumner, in Johnson, pp. 397f.

63. Sumner, in Johnson, p. 399.

64. Sumner, in Johnson, p. 401.

65. Sumner, in Johnson, see pp. 401-4, 407.

66. *From Absolutism to Experimentalism* (1930), cited by Albert Hofstadter and Richard Kuhns in their *Philosophies of Art and Beauty* (Chicago, 1976), p. 577.

67. *Art as Experience* (New York, 1934). See especially Chapters 1, 3, 4.

68. As Hegel says (in the narrower context of the nature of philosophy – but this context may be generalized), "it is just as absurd to fancy that a philosophy can transcend its contemporary world as it is to fancy that an individual can overleap his own age" (PhR Preface, p. 11); "every philosophy is the philosophy of its own day, . . . and thus it can only find satisfaction for the interests belonging to its own particular time" (HPh 1:45).

69. Kojève, p. 92.

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HEGEL'S GRAND SYNTHESIS

A Study of Being, Thought, and History

Daniel Berthold-Bond

This book offers the first genuinely systematic treatment of Hegel's eschatology in the literature. It is an investigation into Hegel's project to demonstrate the ultimate unity of thought and being (consciousness and reality, self and world). The author traces the project through Hegel's epistemology, metaphysics, and philosophy of history.

The grand synthesis creates a basic tension, an ambivalence, that reaches its most acute formulation in Hegel's eschatological language of a final completion or fulfillment of history. This conflicts with his dialectic and Heraclitian metaphysics of becoming. Berthold-Bond concludes that a substantially new approach to Hegel's eschatology is needed.

Daniel Berthold-Bond is Professor of Philosophy at Bard College. He is the author of *Hegel's Theory of Madness*, also published by SUNY Press.

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